

DECEMBER, 1915

15 CENTS

YOUNG'S MAGAZINE



"The Letters"

Complete Novelette

By KATHERINE STEWART

EDWIN F. BAYHA '15

Realistic Short Stories

Various Forms of Headache

"It is necessary in order to treat headaches properly to understand the causes which produce the affection," says Dr. J. W. Ray, of Blockton, Ala. Continuing he says: "Physicians cannot even begin the treatment of a disease without knowing what causes give rise to it, and we must remember that headache is to be treated according to the same rule. We must not only be particular to give a remedy intended to counteract the cause which produces the headache, but we must also give a remedy to relieve the pain until the cause of the trouble can be removed. To answer this purpose Anti-Kamnia Tablets will be found a most convenient and satisfactory remedy. One tablet every one to three hours gives comfort and rest in the most severe cases of headache, neuralgia and particularly the headaches of women."

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HOLLY

By Wilson Clay Missimer

NELSON REDDS entered McGaffney's saloon. It was seven A. M., Monday morning. A few men lounged over the bar, but except for these the place was unoccupied.

The saloon was in an out-of-the-way district of the town. That was why Nelson had selected it. Here was a place where he could bury himself, give himself up to his vice, surrender until he had had his fill.

Periodical had been these sprees. He was a drunkard, going the limit of the pace. He saved his law fees, robbed his wife and baby of their sustenance to go on these spells. Already he was six months behind in his flat rent. He owed grocer and butcher and milkman and laundress. He owed his stenographer at the office. It did not matter. It would all end some day, he knew. But in the meantime he would have his spree.

He had three hundred dollars in his pocket. He would bury himself for five days—not six, because Christmas was Saturday and he must be home Christmas—Christmas Eve, to help his wife hang holly wreaths in the windows of their little flat. Every year she bought holly wreaths and he helped her hang them. He loved her, but he was weak. Alcohol had mastered him. He could stay sober so long. Then—well—

Redds went to a table and sat down. His eyes—blue eyes that might have suggested a certain strength and tenderness were it not for the evidences of dissipation under them—rolled through the place and danced from one bottle to another behind the bar with a sort of ecstatic gleam in them. The bar-tender came to him presently.

"Whiskey," Nelson Redds said. "And you can rent me a room for five days?"

The bar-tender glanced at him sharply and nodded.

"I don't get—I never show it—it hits me here," Redds tapped his head. "I've got to have it. It's a disease. I'll pay for the room."

Redds pulled out his roll and peeled off a bill. "Bring the bottle and a glass. Take out for the bottle."

The bar-tender brought the bottle, the glass and change. Redds poured himself the whiskey glass full to the brim and drained the contents in two gulps. It burned him like fire. He filled the glass again, raised it to his lips, when his gaze wandered upwards and he saw suspended against the mirrors behind the bar two wreaths of holly. He set the glass down and gazed at them.

Holly! Green as the dewy grass of an early morning, the little red berries peeping down upon him with tantalizing persistence. Holly! Christmas and holly went together. He liked holly himself. He had it in his own flat every Christmas. His wife loved it.

His wife! They had been married four years and had a boy of two. Christmas was nearly here. He would be over this spell Friday—Christmas Eve. He raised the tumbler again, but as the fumes of the liquor cleared his nostrils he set it down again. He had a good wife!

Yes, indeed! He recalled at this instant the wonderful color of her eyes—blue, not like his, but bluer, deeper, more wonderful—big eyes, full of trust, fidelity, love. She loved him madly. He knew it—else she would not have stuck to him so long. Well, it was something, this love of a woman.

He sat huddled down in his chair like a man asleep. He had almost forgotten his glass. Now he came to earth and his eyes fell upon it. He smiled. There was no help for him. He would drink himself to death. It would not be long

Without funds the landlord must

eventually attach his goods. His wife would soon give up and go home to her mother and take Tabby with her. His business could endure scarcely six months. Now he held but a handful of clients. This week he had only two cases on schedule—a minor one for this very day—a gigantic lawsuit against a gigantic railroad for Friday. He would not be present to argue either. Oh, well, perhaps the quicker the better!

The door opened and a woman entered the saloon. He recognized her immediately as a Salvation Army worker. She glanced through the place and began distributing handbills, announcing church services at the Army meeting hall and asking alms to feed the city's poor at Christmas. She was a pretty woman—about thirty—his wife's age—and slender, like his wife. Her quaint black hat tied under her chin somehow became her. She approached Nelson. His eyes riveted themselves to a tiny sprig of holly she wore pinned to her coat.

Holly again—green and dry and prickly—but holly, beautiful Christmas holly. There was holly everywhere. Two wreaths of it against the mirrors, a charity worker wearing a sprig of the same stuff.

The girl had paused in front of him. His blue eyes rose from the sprig of holly to her face. She was gazing down upon him as one might gaze at an imbecile. She handed him no poster, she begged of him no alms. Perhaps she read in his face what he was. She made a step as though to hurry on. Then she paused, turned, came closer.

"Why don't you fight this thing till you die?" she said in a low voice. She brought a clenched white fist down fiercely upon the table as she said it. The next instant she had hurried on and the swing doors closed behind her.

II

Nelson Redds stared after her. He smiled. She did not know this disease. The uninitiated were always harsh judges. With a quick, impulsive gesture he grabbed up his glass, bent on ending the emotional weakness to which he had

given way. But the girl's words came back to him with a quick, sudden force. "Why don't you fight this thing till you die?"

Fight it! He set the glass down for the fifth or sixth time. Fight it!—till he died! That meant, never give up. Great God, that slip of a girl had flung him a slogan. Why not? He sat debating the issue. Make this the crisis, make his stand here, make a last struggle. If he failed, then—go to hell with the speed of a bullet.

With a quick impulse he snatched up the glass and deliberately dumped the contents into a cuspidor beside him. Then he arose, and went to the bar, taking bottle and glass with him. "Let me go to my room," he said.

The bar-tender eyed him, then led the way. Into the rear of the place, up a narrow, rickety flight of stairs, down a short, dark hall, into a small bedroom, he took him.

The room had one window. An old bureau, two rickety chairs, an aged bed, a small center-table, comprised the furniture. In a corner was a wash bowl with a single spigot. There was a large glass on the bureau and Redds filled it with water and placed it on the table. Then he uncorked the bottle and took a long inhalation of the fumes as one with a cold would inhale camphor.

The fumes drove a savagery to his brain. For a second he thought he must drain the bottle to its dregs, else he would go mad. He set the bottle down and drank the water. It made a queer gurgling hissing noise as he swallowed it—as though it were rushing over heated stones. But it did not quench that mad desire. He snatched the bottle, held it up, watching the liquor tremble as his hand shook. He contemplated it, anticipated its taste, its effect. He stood there hesitating, struggling, wavering. If he fell now it was over.

"Why don't you fight this thing till you die?" came the words again as plainly as though the girl had but spoken them. And there rose to his mind a picture of his flat, of his wife in it, of his baby, Tabby, a round ball of plumpness and giggles, and he saw four holly wreaths

in the four windows of the room, wreaths he had helped his wife hang. The vision strengthened him for a moment. Then the torrent of mad desire swept back over him like a new wave buffeting the shore.

To stem this fresh onslaught seemed impossible. He resorted to water, gulping down three glasses in as many minutes. Then he came back, reached over and deliberately poured the little tumbler full of whiskey. He pulled up a chair and sat down to watch the liquor.

Noon found him sitting there, the tumbler still full, the whole room reeking with the fumes. He was fighting. It was a battle—a battle that would not end to-day, to-morrow. He would take the week to it. If he won—then he might stand a chance to conquer forever.

Into the afternoon he sat. He felt no hunger; only that awful, insane desire for drink tugging at his palate, gnawing at his stomach, eating up his brain. A hundred times he had raised the glass to gulp the liquid down, surrender and drink himself helpless and a hundred times he had got the strength to set the liquor back on the table. Where he got it God alone knew. He didn't.

He stayed there till night, tempting himself, the fumes of the stuff never out of his nostrils. Then a desire for food came crowding out his mad taste for liquor and with it came a certain sense of peace, a respite which he welcomed. He felt he could not have held out ten minutes longer.

He went out, found a restaurant and ate heartily of cheap, crudely cooked food, enthusiastically hailing it as the best meal he had ever eaten. He returned to his room and spent three hours reading a magazine he had bought. Then, without a glance at the stuff on the table, he undressed, tumbled into bed and was asleep in a wink.

He was up at midnight, mad with thirst. He paced the floor. This longing for liquor was a thousand times worse than it had been during the day. He was nearly mad. His body was hot, feverish, except for his forehead, where beads of perspiration stood. His body, his veins, his blood, his soul were alive

with alcohol and were starving for more. He knew it. He was fighting and would fight, but he feared he could not hold out much longer.

He flew to the wash-stand and drank water, drank it as though his life depended upon the quantity he could take in. Then he went to the window, threw it open and stood breathing in the cool air.

He welcomed the chilly breeze. He gazed across the street. At the corner was a grocery store with a dim electric light aflame in the window. And this window was heaped full of great holly branches and holly wreaths. The sight of this holly seemed to quiet him. He thought of his wife alone with Tabby back there in the flat. A word from him that he was fighting and she would be at his side in an instant, helping him. But he must have no help. He must do it alone—if he was to conquer. He shut the window and got back into bed. He had won another battle.

III

Friday morning at eight he left the place. He had won! There was iron in his soul. He could face liquor and laugh. He could jiggle it under his nostrils, smile, and pour it out, watching it run away, a righteous waste. God! it had been a struggle, a struggle that had not ended with that first day, that first night! He had had to fight every inch of the way and not until this morning did he feel sure. True, the mad moments would come again. But he had the strength now, and, besides, the whole world was with him—his wife, Tabby, his profession, his clients—they were his fighting comrades now. He had won. Four long days and four long nights he had lived with temptation, courting it, inviting it, playing with it, resisting it. He had won! He would go home to his wife and Tabby. He would pay the overdue rent and buy them a Christmas the equal of which they had never seen.

With a buoyancy he had not known in years he returned to the familiar streets. He walked with a quick, agile, springy step, like a man full of health and happiness. His eyes were bright.

Evidences of dissipation had toned down wonderfully.

In front of every grocery store he passed were whole woods of Christmas trees. Every window displayed holly. Christmas shone in the faces he met, in the children that rushed madly past him, never seeing him, bent only on Christmas.

It was a wonderful day, this Christmas Eve, cold and snappy, with no snow. At each breath he took clouds of steam soared upwards.

As he neared his flat his steps quickened. He could scarcely contain his impatience. A sudden mad desire for his wife, for Tabby, swept over him. He wanted to clasp her in his arms, tell her hell was ended, that he had made a fight and won. He leapt up the steps onto the porch. Then he stopped, recoiled. Tacked on his door was a small cardboard placard.

He read it slowly, his heart sinking at each word. His goods had been attached for the rent. There was to be a public sale Monday.

Oh, well, this was not so bad! He had money in his pocket to settle his account—the money he had intended spending on his spree. He still had it, two hundred and eighty dollars.

He got out his key, opened the door, bounded up the steps, let himself into his flat proper. Here silence and darkness greeted him. All the shades were drawn. A strange emptiness seemed in possession. He went to a window and let in some light. The flat was in order, neat, clean. He searched the six rooms. They were deserted. His wife was not here. He returned to the living room and spied a note upon the table. He took it slowly, opened it and read:

"Dear Nelson: It's the end. I could stand it no longer. I love you, but shall never see you again. I have taken Tabby and gone to mother's. Please do not come for me or ask me to return. This is final. My heart is broken.

"MAY."

Nelson read the letter twice. He raised his head and glanced through the room. Then he sauntered through the

place, gazing reverently on surroundings, letting association and memory gnaw his heart with grief. He had won his fight for this—this desertion. She was right, he knew. She should have gone long ago and kicked him into the gutter where he belonged. But had she only endured this once more!

He came to the bath-room and absent-mindedly pulled open the medicine case. There, staring at him, was a whiskey flask. He seized it, unscrewed the stopper and raised the flask to his lips. His fight was ended. He would go to hell now. But as the fumes penetrated his nostrils, he strengthened. The vision of the past four days' fight rose to his mind. He saw the saloon with its two holly wreaths hanging over the mirrors, he saw the Salvation Army girl with her sprig of holly pinned to her coat, bidding him fight this thing till he died; he saw the little room where he had struggled with the demon; he saw the grocery store with its window full of holly. No! He emptied the flask into the wash bowl, watching the whiskey gurgle itself away.

Five minutes later he locked the door of the flat and five minutes after that he was interviewing his landlord.

"Seven months at thirty dollars are two hundred and ten dollars," he said coldly. He counted out the money. "Tear that tag off the door and if the sale has been advertised in the newspapers give them notice calling it off. And for the love of God, man, 'phone my wife that I was here sober, looking better than you have seen me look in a year, and that I paid the rent. Tell her this and nothing more."

A quarter of an hour later Nelson Redds entered his law offices.

The place was deserted. No stenographer pounded away at her machine or sat listlessly awaiting dictation. Of course she had quit him. He entered his private office and in five minutes was plunged into a whole desk full of papers—papers which he had gotten out of a file—papers which he studied for an hour.

At ten o'clock he entered the civil court room of the courthouse and a half dozen lawyers and the judge betrayed

their surprise at seeing him. A large, heavy man rushed forward and grasped his hand. "By gad, Redds, I thought you were on a toot and was going to fail me."

Redds smiled. The large, heavy man was suing a big railroad company for the loss of his wife at a grade crossing and Redds had the case. He stood alone against two of the best lawyers in the city.

Well, he made history that day. Of course, as he pointed out later, it was an easy case with the odds and right all on his side. Any jury in the country would have decided in favor of his client. Nelson Redds had no sooner made his plea and finished with his first witness than the lawyers for the railroad company asked a stay in proceedings in order to offer another proposition to the plaintiff. It was apparent they did not wish the case to go to the jury. The plaintiff was suing for twenty thousand dollars, and with the evidence as it stood—a drunken watchman at the crossing and the guard gates up—Well, the two lawyers retired with Redds and his client to discuss a new proposition. They would settle for ten thousand dollars. Redds asked fifteen. They compromised on twelve. He left the courthouse at one P. M. with a check for two thousand dollars in his pocket as his fee for obtaining the settlement.

IV

Back in his office Redds sent for the "Star" reporter who took care of the court news.

"I have never catered to publicity," he told the newspaper man, "but—now—well, I want you to write that case up in your own way, but say this: Tell the people of this city that Nelson Redds has returned to power, that the Nelson Redds of three years ago conducted this case to-day. And then I want you to see that a copy of this newspaper gets into the hands of my wife. She's home, with her mother."

He deposited his check and drew enough funds to pay all outstanding obligations and to buy a Christmas for his

family. He himself looked up the butcher, grocer, milkman and laundress and paid them.

Christmas Eve and he was one of the eleventh-hour shoppers! He bought holly—loads of it—holly branches and holly wreaths. He bought the most foolish things for his baby. He sent home a small Christmas tree and enough ornaments to trim it a dozen times over. He bought a hundred and one things for his wife. He ordered enough provisions to provide his little flock with ten Christmas dinners and he forgot nothing. When he reached his flat shortly before five, his hallway looked like a department store.

He had bought a paper. The first page carried an account of his case and spoke of him in glowing terms. If the landlord had telephoned his wife and if the paper got into her hands, wouldn't she, perhaps, come home, maybe to-night? Wouldn't curiosity perhaps lead her here? But then if she didn't return, he would go on leading his life, living here alone, keeping sober, attending to business and eventually she must return.

He loaded everything into his flat. He put the provisions into the kitchen. He cut out an old soap box, set up the little tree and trimmed it. He hung the chandeliers with holly branches and suspended wonderful red paper bells that he had bought everywhere through the flat. He left the holly wreaths for her to hang and he would help her.

It was past seven when he had finished, and he was hungry. He had lighted some lights and left the shades partly raised. He got himself a little lunch and munched it in the kitchen.

It was terribly lonesome, but he fought the gloomy inclinations and willed to keep up his spirits. He had to do it, just had to. He could not grow melancholy now, after the triumph of the past week. Christmas—to-morrow was Christmas! And that Salvation Army girl had made a man of him. He was going to look her up some day and let her see the fruits of her advice.

He took the paper and sat down in the front window with the shades up, the light behind him. Perhaps, just for cu-

riosity's sake, his wife would walk by, see him, forgive and return. He waited an hour, two hours, three hours. No one came. It was eleven o'clock when he lowered the shades, put out the lights and got into bed.

He knelt down for the first time in twenty years and said a prayer, an improvised prayer that rose spontaneously from his heart, and surely came to the very ears of God, bringing with it "joy over one sinner that repenteth more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance."

He awoke with the bells of Christmas ringing in his ears. Clash—dong—dang! clash!—dong!—dang!—clash!—dong!—dang!—thousands of them, pealing forth the Christmas message. He was up and dressed in ten minutes, dressing to the rhythm of the wonderful metallic sounds. He did not know bells could be so musical.

It was Christmas! He walked through the little flat, seeing that everything was as he wished it. Tree, holly, toys, presents were placed to suit him. His wife must come to-day, with Tabby. It was Christmas, time of joy, happiness, peace—Christmas, time of holly!

Hark, was not that a step on the stairs? His heart almost stopped beating, then raced along so madly as almost to suffocate him.

Steps there were, coming slowly, hesitatingly. They paused outside the door. A key grated in the lock. The next instant the door swung open and there stood his wife, with Tabby in her arms.

Slender and white, dressed rather shabbily, she stood there. Large, wonderful blue eyes met Redds' in awe and wonder, then left his and swept swiftly through the room. Tabby set up a scuffle in his mother's arms, holding out his little hands toward his father. The next instant the woman placed him on the floor

and he made a rush, crying gleefully, and locked his arms about his father's knees.

And Redds! He had clasped his wife in his arms and held her to him. He had kissed her a thousand times, smoothed her hair, calling her by every term of endearment known to the English language. She lay in his arms, her own locked about his neck.

"You came to me," Redds murmured again and again. "You got my telephone message and the paper——"

She leaned back and swept his face with surprised eyes.

"Your 'phone message, the paper? I don't understand, dear."

"Didn't the landlord 'phone and didn't you see the paper I sent you with an account of my case in it?"

"No, dear. No one 'phoned and I have been too miserable to look at a paper. I came because it's Christmas, because I knew you would come home Christmas. I couldn't leave you to fight the battle alone, I decided to return after all, to help you—so that we could be together Christmas."

"Darling!" Redds held her closer.

And then he told her, beginning where he had entered McGaffney's saloon, where he had drained the first glass of whiskey. He told her about the holly wreaths, about the Salvation Army girl with her sprig of holly and her message to him, about the struggle in the little back room, about the holly in the grocery store window. He told her about his coming home, finding the notice of sale on the door, her own note on the living room table. He told her all as she lay in his arms and Tabby strained at his trouser legs.

Fifteen minutes later he was helping her hang four holly wreaths in the four windows of the living room. It was Christmas. Holly and Christmas go together!



MRS. HALLET-SMITH'S CORPORAL

By Louise Winter

MRS. HALLET-SMITH had been two years in London, when the war broke out. Two years in which she had striven desperately to make some impression on London society.

When Hallet-Smith died the money he left did not warrant his widow's attempting to force an entrance into the New York smart set, and as she had heard it was comparatively easy to enter by the London route, she had taken Gwendolyn, and had gone abroad.

But for some unknown reason, London did not take kindly to Mrs. Hallet-Smith. She was neither extremely clever, nor eccentric enough to provide entertainment for her hosts; she was an ordinary woman, very conventional, commonplace and a snob. She worshipped names. She could boast of a Mayflower ancestor, and she prided herself upon her gentility. Unmistakably, she was a lady!

No one questioned it, but London was surfeited with ladies, and so she found tolerance, that was all. She made a few desirable acquaintances, but the canker of envy gnawed at her heart, she had not "arrived," and she realized it.

But when the war broke out, she decided her opportunity had come. She had plenty of money, and she donated largely to the various relief funds which were started by the aristocracy; she and Gwendolyn knitted mufflers of gray wool for the soldiers, made bandages, and otherwise made themselves conspicuous in the cause of the country in which they were living.

The following summer Mrs. Hallet-Smith, now having a speaking acquaintance with members of the many committees, conceived an almost brilliant plan for bringing herself into prominent notice.

She took a charming house on the

Thames, and wrote to the government, offering to care for half a dozen convalescents who had returned from the field of operations in France. She filled a page with credentials, she referred to the United States Ambassador, she spoke of her connection with relief committees, and then she sat down to wait for the officers who were to be quartered upon her.

Gwendolyn was a pawn in her mother's hands. She was pretty, nineteen, and in two years Mrs. Hallet-Smith had turned her into a passable imitation of the English bread-and-butter miss. Gwendolyn knew that she was expected to contract an alliance—her mother's lofty way of referring to marriage—with some scion of British nobility. Secretly, the girl had romantic longings for love, but outwardly she submitted to her mother's rulings, and accepted the attentions of the half-baked youths who looked her over with supercilious eyes.

When she learned of her mother's offer to the British Government, she was delighted, for she saw through the scheme. Among the officers who would be quartered upon them there would surely be one young enough, handsome enough, grateful enough to fall in love with her. The offer was made with a purpose, though neither mother nor daughter put it into words.

The Cedars was charming, the garden sloped gently down to the river, and Gwendolyn learned to manage a punt. She saw herself gently propelling the broad comfortable craft up the Thames, with a pale, interesting man propped up against the cushions. He had been wounded, not seriously enough to disfigure him, but just enough to elevate him to the ranks of heroism.

And then came reality.

The government promptly accepted Mrs. Hallet-Smith's generous offer, and

notified her that her invalided guests would arrive the end of the week.

The Cedars was a hive of activity for three days. Everything was provided for the comfort of the expected arrivals, and the rector kindly consented to stand by Mrs. Hallet-Smith and assist her in extending a welcome to her guests.

Two motor cars drove up.

Gwendolyn hovered in the background, a dainty vision of girlish beauty, white-clad, with a blue ribbon banded across her forehead and confining her brown curls.

Mrs. Hallet-Smith, in a stiff, embroidered linen gown, felt her heart beat too rapidly for comfort. This, surely, must lead to something.

A sergeant jumped down from the seat beside the chauffeur of the first car. He saluted, then he busied himself helping the men up the steps. They ranged themselves in line, and waited pathetically while the sergeant introduced them to their hostess.

"Private Jonas, Private Splint, Private Dougherty, Private Hale, Private Smock, Corporal Brown!"

Age floated like a mist before Mrs. Hallet-Smith's eyes. Privates, common soldiers, and she had prepared for officers, gentlemen! She could have screamed with disappointment, but she made an effort, and forced herself to say a few words of welcome, then she turned to the rector, and he came gallantly to her rescue.

The butler showed the men to their rooms. The sergeant saw them installed in dainty chintz-furnished quarters, he shook his grizzled head as the incongruity of Private Dougherty in the lilac and white bedroom struck him, but his orders were to escort the men to The Cedars, impress upon them the necessity of curbing their tongues under a lady's roof, and then leave them to their fate.

Mrs. Hallet-Smith was game. She said nothing of her chagrin to the rector; she accompanied him on a visit of inspection to see that her guests had everything they needed for the night, and then she retired to her own room, and fought the thing out.

Gwendolyn, however, was unable to

hide her feelings. After one horrified glance at the men's uniforms, she darted out of a side door, sped across the lawn as rapidly as her feet could carry her, and burst into the rectory, where Lady Martin and her daughters were at tea. Lydia and Mercy Martin, who had also cherished secret hopes, heard her and their faces fell. It was too horrible, there must be some mistake—but Gwendolyn shook her head, it was only too true, and then Lydia sobbed.

Five privates and a corporal! Mrs. Hallet-Smith shuddered. They were soldiers wounded on the field of battle, they were embryo heroes, possible winners of the Victoria Cross, but they could not advance her socially, and a husband for Gwendolyn could not be selected from their midst.

In the morning, when she made her rounds, she gave them a look of closer inspection. They were middle-aged men, with one exception, Corporal Brown; he was young, quite a boy, in fact, and his fair head resting against the white pillow did not look as out of place as the heads of Private Jonas and Private Dougherty. But Mrs. Hallet-Smith compressed her lips and her voice was quite cold, as she asked if there was anything that Corporal Brown required to add to his comfort under her roof?

"Thank you, nothing. You are very good," murmured Corporal Brown.

Mrs. Hallet-Smith frowned, he had not said, "Ma'am," and the quality of his voice was different; he was probably a shopkeeper's son who had enlisted. She dismissed all thought of him presently, and settled down to her morning stipend of so many rows on her gray muffler.

The five privates improved rapidly, but Corporal Brown's wounds took longer to heal. There was an ugly gash in his side, a bayonet thrust, which kept his temperature up.

Gwendolyn, passing the door one day, heard him moaning, and she tip-toed gently into the room. He seemed to be in great pain, and as she looked down at his fever-flushed face, her heart stirred with pity. His hair lay in damp rings on his forehead; his eyes, unnatu-

rally bright, stared unrecognizingly into hers; his lips were dry and cracked. The bandages had become loosened, and Gwendolyn, who had taken a course in nursing with Lydia and Mercy, stooped over him and with deft fingers rearranged the bandages.

"Water!" he gasped, "I'm burning up!"

She brought a glass of water to him, and slipped her arm under his head, so that he could drink comfortably.

"Poor fellow," and her voice vibrated with sympathy, "you're suffering dreadfully, aren't you? How I wish I could do something for you!" There were tears in her eyes, and the young man stared at her.

"What an angel you are!" he murmured, and his tone made Gwendolyn blush.

She lingered. Of course, he was only a corporal, but he was different from the men in the other rooms. She knew her mother wouldn't approve, but Mrs. Hallet-Smith had gone to town that day, and so Gwendolyn offered to read to Corporal Brown. Perhaps he might become interested and forget his dreadful pain.

He thanked her, and she brought a book of Tennyson, and read to him until the white lids closed over the blue eyes, and he dropped off into sleep.

Gwendolyn managed many stolen visits to Corporal Brown's room. The nurse whom Mrs. Hallet-Smith had engaged to look after the men's needs, took it as a matter of course, and as no matter how high the young man's delirium mounted, it always yielded to the girl's soothing presence, the nurse fell into the habit of summoning Gwendolyn every time her patient was restless.

Mrs. Hallet-Smith was occupied with her own affairs. She was not going to accept one defeat, and she began to pull wires in order to accomplish her purpose.

The five privates remained ten days at The Cedars, and then they were pronounced well enough to rejoin their regiment. Corporal Brown, however, was still confined to his bed, and Mrs. Hallet-Smith grudgingly consented to his remaining on.

"But we shall have to move him," she said, "because Captain Sir Harry Leslie, Lady Leslie's nephew, who was wounded at the Battle of the Marne, is coming to us. I had the most charming letter from Lady Leslie, she is with the hospital corps, you know, asking me to look out for Sir Harry. And, of course, I couldn't have this common soldier on the same floor. Caste is so strong over here."

"Are they so particular in the trenches?" Gwendolyn asked mildly. "I should imagine that Sir Harry may have been even closer than the next room to the common soldier on the battlefield."

Mrs. Hallet-Smith gazed at her daughter reprovingly, then she turned to the rector. "My dear Sir John, what shall we do with our children?" she murmured.

Gwendolyn bit her lip and subsided into silence. She could have told her mother a few things that would have greatly surprised that worthy lady, but she was keeping her own counsel.

Corporal Brown was moved to the west wing, to a small, plainly furnished room; but Gwendolyn had added many little touches to give it a homelike atmosphere, so that when she stood back to survey her work, she was almost satisfied with the result.

Corporal Brown took the announcement that he was to be moved to the west wing with a queer little smile.

"To make room for Captain Sir Harry Leslie," and the smile broadened into a grin.

Captain Sir Harry Leslie arrived. He was tall, fair, with a drooping mustache, and a bored manner, and he carried his right arm in a sling.

The day after his arrival the rector and Lady Martin, Lydia and Mercy, and the curate, who was related to the Bishop of Binghampton, dined at The Cedars.

The Captain told a story of bravery under fire.

"It was for the sake of a dog, a puppy, but the little beggar had wormed himself into the men's hearts; they shared their food with him, they played with him, he was the one bright spot in those

dreary weeks in the trenches. And then one day, Pete was missing. He was a prisoner in the enemy's trench. One man volunteered to get him back. He succeeded, and by Jove, it was the pluckiest thing I ever witnessed! I'd like to have that man's friendship."

Gwendolyn leaned forward. She knew all about Pete, but she had never heard the story of his capture by the enemy. "But the man who rescued him was a common soldier," she said.

"He was a corporal, a fellow named Brown, bit of a mystery, but I'd give a good deal to shake hands with him again."

Mrs. Hallet-Smith had forgotten the name of the man in the west wing, and none of the others remembered it, so that Gwendolyn's flush passed for embarrassment at the rebuke.

It was the next day, however, before she got the chance of a word alone with Sir Harry.

She was coming down from the west wing, and she met the Captain at the foot of the staircase.

"Parkins, my man, tells me you have a convalescent here from my regiment. I thought I'd like to see him, perhaps I could do something to cheer the poor beggar up," he drawled.

"That's good of you," said Gwendolyn. "He'll be delighted to see you; he's sitting up to-day."

She turned and led the way back to the little room under the eaves. She paused in the doorway. "Cecil, here's someone to see you!" she called softly.

Sir Harry knitted his brows. "Cecil! Rum name for a private!" and then he took one step into the room, and stood still.

The man in the easy chair in front of the window was less taken by surprise. He knew of the Captain's presence in the house, so he simply waited.

"Cecil Vibbert! By Jove, but they said a man from the Fifteenth—eh, what?" He was speechless, but he came into the room, and held out his hand eagerly.

"Corporal Brown, attention!" laughed Gwendolyn.

Sir Harry paused again. "Corporal Brown!"

"Didn't recognize me, did you, old top? I recognized you, but thought it better on account of military etiquette not to make myself known."

"But why were you masquerading?"

"Mother sent me to America when I was twenty, but I'd lived until then in England, and my heart was always over here. However, I stuck it out for five years. Remember, you spotted me for an Englishman, the first minute you laid eyes on me out in Montana. When the war broke out, I wrote the mater that I was coming home. She wrote I was to stay where I was, at the risk of being cut off. I answered her letter dutifully, and took the first ship for the other side. Then I enlisted. I happened to be assigned to your regiment, and that's all."

"All!" Sir Harry marveled. "You raised yourself to the rank of corporal; you exposed yourself under fire to rescue the trench mascot; you were wounded at the Battle of the Marne; and now I find you convalescing in a compatriot's charming home; the lovely daughter calls you 'Cecil'—indeed, my dear fellow, that's not all, by any means!"

Cecil laughed, but Gwendolyn stole shyly to his side and slipped her hand in his.

"Will you help us persuade mother it's all right?" she asked.

"Why shouldn't it be all right?"

"It is, but we want help to make her see it."

Mrs. Hallet-Smith reconciled herself to the inevitable. There was one thing she could take comfort in. The Honorable Mrs. Merle, Cecil Vibbert's mother, was one of the smartest women in England. She was an American who had married two English husbands; Cecil was her only child by the first marriage, and would undoubtedly come in for some part of his mother's fortune. And then, the daughter-in-law of the Honorable Mrs. Merle would be a person of importance.

But the set in which the Honorable Mrs. Merle moved, for a long time, kept on referring to Cecil Vibbert as Mrs. Hallet-Smith's Corporal.

THE WAY OF THINGS

By Nalbro Bartley

"**I** WISH I was dead!"
"Wish something new," said the woman who stood staring out the window at the driving rain.

"Dying's easier than living," the small girl dragged herself off the divan and came over to watch the leaking waterspout drip down into the dismal stone courtyard of the East Side rooming-house.

"You don't say so!" The woman still stood looking out, counting telegraph poles and scanning the rear view of other furnished room windows, where bottles of milk, water-soaked brown paper parcels and bundles of delicatessen scraps still lingered outside. A blue mist had settled over the air, forerunner of a heavy fog. A bare tree limb shot up directly in front of them without hint of bud or leaf, although it was late spring. A ragged gray cat huddled on one of the dead limbs and yowled. The ash cans were uncovered and rolled along the stone pavement leading to the basement kitchen.

Tillie could be heard scolding in her loud, unpleasant voice, threatening to leave and Mrs. Jacobs, the landlady, was answering back in no uncertain terms.

"There's others that'll leave, too," she was heard to say. "This ain't any charity organization. My Gawd, that butcher has nerve! Look at his bill, Tillie, it'll be so that bologna sausage is only to be had for Christmas dinner."

"Oh, it's tulip time in Holland," sang one of the debonair young men roomers passing just outside the door where the two women were.

"And it's garlic time in Rome," supplemented his partner.

Their light, quick feet ran down the stairs and presently a door banged.

Above them the lithograph artist and his wife resumed their fighting, the art-

ist taking the defensive with weakened ardor.

"I won't," shouted the woman.

"You're drunk," snarled the man.

Then something smashed.

And Mrs. Jacobs gave vent to her feelings upon discovering the case of beer to have been surreptitiously emptied.

"I wished I was dead," repeated the small girl leaning against the older woman. "What's the use of trying? It isn't any use, is it? I can't try any more, I'm bushed." She waited a minute for an answer and then seeing the woman's intentional silence, she walked away and sat down on one of the stiff oak chairs. She could look across at herself in the cracked mirror. Below it was a pitiful attempt at a dressing table, with a few boxes of make-up, a gilt jewel case and an abundance of wire hair pins. A red calico curtain concealed their wardrobe and a narrow cot was stretched beside the sagging divan. A couple of the stiff chairs, a single gas plate and a packing trunk filled with dishes and "supplies" was all the room contained.

"Look at me," she begged with a childish sort of appeal.

"I know what we both look like," the older woman said without moving.

The girl stared on at the reflection in the cracked, smeared mirror. She saw a pale, oval face with pinched, cruel lines and deep lilac shadows under the blue eyes. The very gold of her hair seemed dulled; it lay in limp, neglected strands around her well-modeled head.

"Aren't you going to talk any more, Sylvia?" she asked. "Seems to me I'll die if you don't talk to me."

"Does it, kid?" There was a rough kindness in the older woman's voice and she turned to face the girl. "I'm not very much to talk to and I don't want to look at myself, Tamsie."

Tamsie did not add, "I know you

don't, you couldn't want to," but both women understood it as if she had. For it was a roughened marred face of a once beautiful woman, a woman with the same sort of deep, sapphire eyes and naturally golden hair that Tamsie had, with regular, clear-cut features and a willful, Cupid's bow mouth that could curve into smiles or pout becomingly. There was still a certain regal carriage to the faded yellow head and the firm, straight lines of a womanly figure. Even the cheap black velvet dress with its spotted beaded trimming and the worn black slippers with tattered bows did not entirely detract from the impression of dignity. It had gained her the name of "countess" among the burlesque troupe; while the lines in her face, the faded complexion and the unmistakable vampire glitter of the eye caused Sylvia to be regarded with respect in the matter of business dealings by both men and women, and to be set down as someone who knew all the tawdry, wretched tricks of her profession.

"What will we do, Sylvia?" asked the small girl, her thin hands folding and unfolding the dull blue dress skirt. Instinctively and because she had not yet traveled the road Sylvia's regal, willful feet had so long trod, Tamsie dressed as simply as her environment permitted.

"Well, I guess there's others that have starved, kid," then she gave a laugh. She put one hand good-naturedly on Tamsie's yellow head. "Do your hair up better and get some clothes on; you can make a better front than this. We might get a booking for some of the Jersey resorts."

"I can't," said the girl slowly. "I'm through trying to act." She broke into hoarse sobs, putting her hands up to her face and letting the tears trickle through. "It was all a mistake, a mistake, I tell you—I'll scrub or wait table, but I won't go back—not with those people, Sylvia. You're the only one that was good to me and you're—"

"I ain't your sort, am I?" She laughed, showing her broken, yellowed teeth. "I was once, but it was a long time ago." She folded her arms across

her bosom and stood in front of Tamsie commandingly. "Look up here, kid. Let's face the music. We're about broke. Nobody wants us. I've had my day and you ain't the kind that has a day, I guess. When I started in the show business I was going to go big. I was going to have my name in electric lights in front of the biggest Broadway theatre—and here I am. I was fool enough to believe a man that told me he'd put me there. He put me *here*, God thank him! I gave up the finest thing in the world, the love of a good man, for that—that other. It didn't take long for him to tire of me and tell his story to the next pair of fresh blue eyes, and cheeks that knew how to blush naturally. Well, when a woman has had that played on her, she gets reckless. I did. It was too late to go back, that's what I thought then. Now, there's nobody there to have me come back."

"What did you do, Sylvia?" Tamsie had dropped her hands and was watching the wreck of a one-time splendid woman.

"Oh, I batted around, didn't care. I was young and good looking and had lots of—pep." She gave a dispirited laugh. "I thought I'd show the man some day what a mistake he had made in thinking I was a dead one, and I wanted to forget the—man who had really cared. I went with this show and then with that as one of the 'good-lookers.' I had a good time, as they say." Her face darkened. "Then I began to grow old. Oh, there's no use trying to hand it to you on a silver tray, kid," she jerked out angrily. "You've gotta know what's what unless you've made up your mind to go by the gas route. There are pointers—"

"Sylvia, don't, please—"

"Why, it's only a baby, isn't it?" said the woman more gently. There was a pause and then she finished. "I'll cut it short, kid. First one show and then another and each time a little poorer and a little further back from the footlights. By and by I was down and out and I got tough. No, don't ask me if I hate myself. 'Myself' died about fifteen years ago. I didn't know it, then. I thought myself was living, doing fine. I've been chumming with a corpse for fifteen

years." She laughed again and the girl winced at the sound.

"This last job is about my finish: playing the old woman parts with Beese's burlesque, the curtain raiser, the tough rooming-house woman, the mother-in-law that gets handed the slapsticks! And now the show is closed. And there isn't a soul in the world that knows or cares if I live or die, and we've got ten weeks of summer without a booking!"

"What will we do?" repeated Tamsie weakly. "Sylvia, I don't want to go back with that kind of people."

"Who'll have you?" demanded Sylvia cruelly.

"Nobody." The yellow head drooped.

Outside the rain began to lash itself against the window-panes. And one of the bare tree limbs tapped dismally against the glass.

"What made you try the stage, kid?" asked Sylvia a little later. "I heard you made pretty good last year with a real Broadway chorus. Where did you come from, anyway? You've skidded quick!"

She sat down on the divan, leaning her faded yellow head against the wall. "Tell it. I ain't got anybody to pass it along to. It helps to tell."

"I came from a little bit of a place in Ohio, Silver Lake. My mother's sister raised me, my aunt Retta."

"That ain't far from Harristown," remarked Sylvia quickly.

"Just eight miles if you drive and five by rail. Why? Ever been there?"

"A long time ago."

"I always wanted to be an actress; not a chorus girl but to do real parts. One time my aunt and I visited in Cleveland and I began going to see a stock company. One of the actresses boarded at the house where we visited and she took a liking to me. I told her what I wanted to do and she said if I came to New York she'd help me all she could. She thought I was just a kid and would never come. But when we went back home I kept begging and begging to come. I had saved nearly a hundred dollars from teaching school two winters. Seems funny now, doesn't it? But I had. By and by my aunt said yes. Of course, she didn't want me to. And if

I was to go back now I'd break her heart. I've kept writing to her and telling her I was doing well. But I'm ahead of my story.

"The actress got me a job in the chorus of Fritz Scheff's show. I made up well as a drummer boy, so I got what seemed to me like a lot of money. I wrote my aunt how I was doing and sent her five dollars every week. Of course I didn't tear around like the other girls, smoke and swear and drink. I studied after the show—yes, honest, Sylvia—and tried to get ready to do something better. But I kept having headaches from overwork and my back gave out and I never seemed to get a chance to see a manager. Then I met a man. Not your kind, Sylvia. He was real. He took a lot of the girls to suppers and things; but he only sat and sort of laughed at them, not with them, just let them amuse him. He wasn't caddish and the girls were crazy about him. They all said he was a gentleman and wished he'd fall dead in love. He met me one night when he was taking some of them to supper; I went along just because I had heard so much about him. It was the first time, but of course he wouldn't believe that! He took me home and didn't ask for a kiss when he left, either. He used to take me driving afternoons and lend me books and the girls teased me about him. And I loved him. There's no use not telling the truth. I loved him. I could have died for him."

"Could you, kid?" The countess' faded head turned itself away.

"Don't laugh at me—don't—or I'll lose what little sense I've got left. I know your kind sneers at getting married and not caring for anything but making and keeping a home. But that's what I was brought up to think about and then this actress bee got in my bonnet and buzzed louder than any other idea until I met Phil."

The countess apparently did not seem to be listening.

"After that I only wanted to get off the stage and be myself, to marry him and be the best sort of life pal I could. He was quite a lot older than me; but there was something boyish about him

except when he'd turn cynical all at once and make you feel you were a sham, a paste jewel. He'd sort of dismiss you gently, I don't mean like a quitter—but as if he didn't care enough and didn't want to give you any wrong impression. But we kept on being friends and I kept on caring harder and harder. And it hurts to care like that."

"Well?"

"In the summer I went home to my aunt. I had a lot of pretty good clothes and enough money to make a front, because our show had played steady. I was happy about Phil—a woman always keeps hoping, you know—and I told my aunt I'd met someone and I thought maybe we might be married. I couldn't help it, Sylvia, even though he'd never spoken. That made her happy, too. I only stayed two weeks because we were due for rehearsals and a road tour. Besides, I had to see Phil."

"Did he write you?"

"No. He'd gone away before I did; he was camping in the mountains for a month. I didn't even know his address. But when he came back and I saw him, I guess I made a fool of myself. I showed him how hard I cared; I said I didn't want to go on the road because I'd be away from him; that it had seemed a lifetime since I'd seen him and that the little country town was a desert. But he didn't believe me."

"Why?"

"He said—and I remember every word as if it was yesterday—he said: 'Look here, little girl, don't try to string me. You'll be telling me your birthday is the same as mine and that you felt as if you always knew me from the start. I don't want you to stay in New York because of me, you or any other of your sort.' His face got hard and cruel-looking and it seemed as if he was trying not to show all he felt. I guess I must have cried because he went on: 'I believed in a woman once, a girl no older than yourself and with the same big, baby eyes and yellow hair and a chin that could quiver. She really was from a little country town—we'd grown up together—and she promised to marry me. I hadn't my start yet, but I was trying to

do what would make her proud of me. She came to New York and went on the stage and kept writing me how lonesome she was for me and all the rest of those perfumed women's lies. And when I came to see her, I found her a painted, disloyal woman with a fat, ratty man for a lover. And she laughed at me and told me to go home and take care of my mother's garden, that she was going to be a famous actress! And that killed something in me that can't live again, even if I wanted it to. I take you girls to supper and pay you attention because it gives me a sort of grim satisfaction, the same as a man has when he visits the grave of his worst enemy. I like to watch you delude yourselves into thinking you've got me. I didn't go back and take care of my mother's garden or I didn't put a gun through the man or myself. She wasn't worth it. I learned my lesson. I went to work and I've made a success. But I don't want any chorus girl telling me that she loves me and she doesn't want to go on the road because she'll have to leave me.'"

"Well?" Sylvia's bloated eyes were busy watching the coming fog.

"I tried to tell him that it wasn't anything but real. I asked him if it was fair to judge all women by one, that I'd always been the right sort; but he wouldn't listen. I asked him to give me time to prove it, but he just said: 'If I have made you unhappy, which I doubt, I am sincerely sorry. For you have given me a great many pleasant hours of your society. If you mean what you say, I'm sorry for what is ahead of you. I'd like to let myself care hard, but something won't let me. When a woman takes away a man's faith in her, she creates a distrust in all women and only that woman can bring that faith back again—which has never been done. I don't know where the woman I loved is; I went around in a sort of trance for months after I saw her.' I kept on and on pleading with him and finally he shoved some money into my hand and started to go and the last thing he said was: 'Don't start coming to my office, Tamsie, it won't do you any good. I'll

get over my notion of visiting my enemy's grave."

"I ran up and shoved the money back in his pocket and stood there crying. I'd forgotten all my dignity and I kept on asking him to let me prove what I said. But all he would answer was: 'I'd like to love you, but I can't. There's a mocking sort of mirage that comes up and stays between us. I'm a silly, oldish man that's nursed his bruised egotism too long.'"

"Did you go to his office?"

"No. That broke me. Something snapped in my head and I felt weakish and ashamed at what I'd said. And when I went out on the road the manager kept yelling at me to smile and not act like a sick woman and then I got a cold and was left behind and finally I had to join the burlesque. I met you, Sylvia, and you were good to me. Why were you so good to me?"

"Don't know. Guess it's because its too late to be good to myself."

"If he could see me now I suppose he'd say I had brought myself here. I've kept on writing my aunt, but I can't go home. God, I can't eat or sleep except in the park!" Her little hands were thrust out appealingly. "And all because of one woman that didn't play square! I wonder if she knows what she's done; or how could she make it right if she did know? She couldn't, could she? I'd rather have Phil think I was dead than to know I was here. I've been white-hot ashamed ever since that day. Isn't it an awful thing to kill a human being's faith, countess?"

"What was your guy's name?"

"Philip—Philip H. Wyckoff—he's got a big office down on East——"

"Golly, but it's pouring down!" Sylvia rose and strolled nonchalantly to the window. A dull red crept into the yellowed cheeks and throat but Tamsie did not see it. It seemed almost like a vivid scald instead of a belated, bedraggled blush, born of a woman's twelfth-hour shame.

"I wish I was dead," the girl repeated in a monotone.

The blush faded and with it some of the cruel lines. "Here's a dollar, kid," she put her hand in her bosom. "Go out

and get some eats and we will have a feed. Get some meat." She held out the tattered bill commandingly.

"I'm not hungry. I just want to lie down and sleep and sleep——"

"Go on and get some meat." There were tears in the blue eyes. "Tamsie, you've all the years ahead of you; this ain't the stepping-off place. Go on and get something." She gently pushed the girl out of the room.

Fifteen minutes later there stood in place of the countess a bent, old woman with white hair and glasses, dressed in a black alpaca and a plaid shawl. Honest black cotton gloves covered her hands and there was no hint of rouge or powder or penciled eyebrows. A bonnet with strings, and a veil covered the face and the slippers were replaced by broad, flat-heeled boots.

"Good billiards that I didn't sell this costume," said the countess, readjusting her glasses. "Well, if I was the goat in Beese's burlesque, I'm the star in this one." She gave a choked laugh. "He can't do any more than put me out or call a bull and maybe—maybe I can——"

She slipped quietly down the stairs and into the street.

II

"I wouldn't have missed having you look me up for the world, Mrs. Lamb." The big, burly man leaned back in his office chair to look at his guest admiringly. "It's been like a slice of home."

"Well, now, and I thought that maybe you'd not remember me. Seems kind of queer to be sitting here talking to the little Phil Wyckoff that used to play barefoot with the Hooker boys that lived across from us. Remember when you went blackberrying for the minister and wouldn't give the money up for the heathen, went to the circus, didn't you?" The dim eyes behind the veil and glasses peered at him almost fearfully.

"Should say we did—pink lemonade and peanuts and the fat lady as a special treat."

"Remember how you went swimming in Cuddy's creek and rescued the little

colored girl? Her mother was working for the Meadows that fall."

"Oh, pshaw, I didn't rescue her—just grabbed hold and towed her in."

"They all seemed to think it was something more. Well, it's been real good to see you, Phil." She gathered her plaid shawl in one trembling hand. "I never knew you real well, just used to see you playing around."

"I can remember your house, though, on the seventh line. One story, but a slate roof and yellow roses on the outside, Mrs. Lamb."

"Last thing Sebastian did was to plant them roses." Mrs. Lamb had died two years ago, and Sylvia had come upon the notice in a chance Harristown paper, so she was safe in picking her character. "Well, the city is a great place, isn't it? Last thing Miss Meadows said to me when I left to come to visit my niece was: 'Look up Phil Wyckoff and tell him we wish he'd come back to visit. He hasn't been here since his mother died and the place was sold. He's a pretty big man in the city now.' So I done it; only one Philip Wyckoff in the directory, Agnes said; I got her to look because my eyes is poor. . . . No, thanks, I better be going. Just glad to see somebody from Harristown, even if I did use to chase you boys off my berry patch!" She gave a nervous little laugh.

"I'm going home sometime," said the man, a lonesome look creeping into his face. "But it hasn't seemed as if I'd care to go back since—since the place was sold. I've been busy, you know, and one thing and another."

"I know, Phil," she soothed. "You don't mind my calling you 'Phil,' do you? Seems as if you were just one of the little boys Sebastian used to take fishing."

"I remember, Mrs. Lamb, and your calling me Phil seems to be the best thing that's been said to me." He leaned forward earnestly, there was something strangely familiar yet undefinable about this tall, old woman who trembled and tottered and whose thin voice was uncertain. "You're so real, that may sound odd to you, Mrs. Lamb, but when you've lived the sort of life I have, real things are very precious. I'd rather have your

word for something than a dozen pledges from the first ten men I know. We get awfully tangled up down here, and good women like you are scarce."

She swayed slightly and put one of her black cotton gloved hands to her forehead as if she were in pain. "I must be going along; Agnes will think I'm lost. They treat me like a child." Again the nervous, quavery laugh. "You didn't know anyone over in Silver Lake, did you, Phil?"

"No, just used to have hayracks over there once in a while."

"Never knew Retta Rowland, did you? Had a little niece named Tamsie?"

"N—no." He began folding and unfolding a sheet of paper.

"Thought maybe you did. Good-by, Phil. I'll try to run in before I go home Saturday but Agnes has planned a lot to see and I'm not as spry as—"

"What about Tamsie Rowland—the name is familiar?"

"Phil, I'm so broke up about it I can't talk." There was a sob in her voice that made him wonder. "Maybe I hadn't ought to tell but you seem like one of our own—I ain't even told Agnes yet. Retta Rowland and me went to school. Her sister, Tamsie's mother, was a lot younger than us and she married a no-account fellow and came back to her sister to die. Retta took her little baby to bring up, she named her Tamsie. She was a little flower-like girl with big, blue eyes and soft yellow hair, and as true as her eyes were blue. I've known her since she was rocked in her cradle. Retta brought her up like only Retta could bring up a girl, to be everything a woman should be and more. Tamsie taught school two winters—she wasn't but eighteen or so—and then she got the idea of coming to New York to be an actress. Had about a hundred dollars, I guess, and a letter to some lady. Of course Retta could trust Tamsie any place; you see Tamsie is different from most girls. She's the old-fashioned, sincere sort that has a natural innocence. You don't often find 'em these days, they've almost lost the pattern. She went into a company of a Miss Frizzy Chef—I guess it was the chorus." Her

voice shrank to a horrified whisper. "But it didn't spoil Tamsie. No, sir, home she came in the summer as happy as a little bird, been sending her aunt money every week, writing home as faithful as if she was to boarding school. And she was in love—Phil, maybe I oughtn't to tell you?"

"Please tell me," he begged. "I want very much to know."

"Some man that she wouldn't tell his name. All she talked of was her 'pal,' that was what she called him. Seems he must have been a gay sort of a fellow, taking actresses out to supper. He was taken with Tamsie, but not in earnest. She was all in earnest, and thought he was different. Why, Retta told me how that little ki—girl—used to get down at night and pray to be worthy of her 'pal.' Think of any fellow that would let a girl go on caring hard and not be in earnest! Well, she come back to go on with the sh—play—it was going out on the road and Retta didn't like that. But Tamsie gave her to understand that this fellow was going to marry her; likely—not that he'd said it, you know, but she just took it for granted, didn't know there were gu—men—that just played fast and loose. Then her letters didn't come often and it seems she caught cold and was sick in a Pennsylvania town. She joined another sh—company—not as nice a one, I guess. Lately, Retta hasn't heard regular at all and she is worried. Retta's lame or she'd have come with me. But seeing I was coming, she charged me to tell Tamsie to come home, that she was dreaming troubled dreams of her nights. And, Phil, when I went to the address Retta gave me, it was a bare, miserable place and she's sharing a barn of a room on the third floor with a cheap, bad woman *that ain't fit for her to know!*"

"Where is the place?" he asked quickly, almost roughly.

"Two-thirty-nine, East F— street, yes, that's it. And about all that's left of Tamsie is her blue eyes. Oh, she didn't complain, tried to act as if it was a spell of hard luck; but the child ain't got carfare to come home. I'm going to borrow from Agnes and take her back

with me Saturday. But she's just coming home to die, Phil, like her mother did. There's the look in her eyes that tells me. It's the man, that's what it is; and she doesn't say a word of blame. When I asked her of him, she tried to answer steady, but she couldn't. I took her right in my arms like I used to take my little Sibbie and held her tight and let her cry it out. But all she'd say was: 'He thought I was like the rest of them, painted and false and everything that isn't good. And I couldn't make him understand. He'd just lost faith in women, I guess, and it's too late!' Phil, ain't there any law that makes a man liable to be shot? If I had my Sebastian's squirrel rifle here I'd try to find him out and do the job." She sat upright with indignation. Two tears, real tears from the very depths of a despairing woman's heart, dropped onto the black cotton gloves. They sparkled like diamonds. "Well, we'll take her home to real people where she belongs and try to help her forget. Why, boy, she thinks that man might have cared if he could believe that she wasn't like the others. Where was his eyes? It's hard to see a little girl that you've watched grow up, step by step, and known as I've known Tamsie, it's hard to see her crushed. Let me see, she must be a good fifteen years younger than you—yes, just about—and, of course, you wouldn't remember about Retta over in Silver Lake. Now if it was only a man like you, Phil. You've known what it was to lose faith in someone—forgive me, boy, but we all remember Sylvia—but you don't go on judging everyone because of poor, silly Sylvia that went and lost herself and—"

"Mrs. Lamb," the big man stood up suddenly like a soldier answering roll-call, "I'm the man your Tamsie loves. I'm the blinded, selfish fool that's hurt her just because of—of—Sylvia. I wanted to care, had to grip myself not to let go; she seemed like Sylvia come back again, as she used to be back in Harris-town when we first were sweethearts. Don't you suppose I'd want to care for her? But—oh, what's the use wasting time! I'm going to her, you're coming

with me, and after I've married Tamsie you can shoot me all you want to."

"Phil! You're dreaming—it ain't so—it can't be so——"

"Don't hate me for it, don't."

"What are you going to do?" she asked. The crucial moment had arrived.

"I'm going to get Tamsie and marry her to-day, as soon as we can get a license and find a minister. Then I'll take her home to Retta."

"It's a miracle, a miracle." The thin figure rocked itself to and fro, tears rolling down her cheeks. "But you mustn't tell Tamsie I've told you this, she'd never forgive me or feel right toward you. Don't you see how she'd feel—leastways until you're man and wife? Promise me that, Phil. Can't you see how it would make her feel? Promise me, Phil, let her think you suddenly come to your senses and got her address from—from some theatrical man. Promise, like you boys used to promise when you'd done wrong and were sorry. 'Cross my heart and hope to die.'" Her trembling hands were stretched out to him.

"I promise, 'cross my heart and hope to die.' Do you forgive me? Oh, what a mess one woman can make," he ended bitterly.

His visitor did not answer.

He called outside for a machine. "Then you won't come with me?"

"Land knows I'd be crazy to—but it'd never do. I'll go on and meet—meet Agnes at Wanamaker's." She folded her shawl around her carefully. "You go and get that little girl and marry her—marry her to-day, Phil."

"I don't need any urging," he answered.

"And then you take her home to Retta; I'll be there Saturday and I'll get Lem Wallace to drive me over to see you Sunday. Why, I'm a Santa Claus; if Sebastian was alive, he'd think I wasn't such a silly 'fraid cat as he used to like to tease me about. Think of walking into your office, almost a stranger except for being from the same town, and telling you about Tamsie and you being the man, the man that didn't believe in her because Sylvia Rodney made you lose faith!"

"You've given me back my faith," he said, his hands resting lightly on her shoulders. "Don't tremble so, Mrs. Lamb, you're over-tired. You've done the finest thing in the world and I don't know how to thank you."

"Thank me by always being good to the little ki—girl," she said dully.

Together they passed out of the office building, separating reluctantly at the street.

"I'll give you the best auto rides Silver Lake or Harristown ever saw, and I'll let you kiss my wife," he cried, leaning his big, handsome head out of the taxicab. "See you Sunday!" All the mist had vanished. Only Tamsie, the tiny, blue-eyed girl who cared, who was real, who had prayed to be worthy of him—he bowed his head reverently at the thought—only Tamsie was paramount. That and the wonderful task of begging her forgiveness for all the rest of the days of his life.

Meanwhile the tall figure of the old woman entered the department store and sought a writing desk. Putting a stamp on an envelope she addressed it to Philip Wyckoff at his business address and then, hesitating a moment, wrote quickly:

"Phil:

"Don't let Tamsie hate a dead woman. And you told me I had done the finest thing in the world. Besides, it is all true—as the years will show. 'Cross my heart and hope to die!"

"SYLVIA."

She posted the letter and passed into a small block park, almost deserted because of the rain. By this time the taxicab would have reached East F—street; and Phil would have raced up the stairs, bound to secrecy, and have grasped Tamsie in his strong arms and told her he had come to believe; that because of one fickle, worthless woman who had given him a distorted outlook he was not going to lose one loyal little pal—and then they would be married.

She reached inside her waist and drew out a small flask of dark-colored liquid. Uncorking it, she drank slowly, a smile spreading on her features. After all,

she appeared to be but a gentle old woman, a trifle shabbily dressed, resting! She, the countess. Well, you can't be bad successfully unless you pretend to be good. And it was kind to die in such a masquerade; they might almost picture her as someone's forgotten mother; the starved maternal had surged to the top at the last. Sometimes at the twelfth hour one can still achieve. Perhaps they would see how bloated the face was and how dyed the hair and someone with a memory of his mother would understand the last effort and would leave the wig and the plain black stage dress as they were and wrap the worn, useless hands in the homely shawl. They would never know it was her sole surviving costume of Beese's burlesque!

She was getting sleepy; she wondered if, after all, Tamsie would really under-

stand and appreciate him. A flash of pain crossed her face. Just when she had come to realize and prize all that such a man's love might have meant, had rescued it to give to another, she must, of necessity, pass out. Why, there was not a shadow of an excuse for her to live.

"That is the way of things, kiddie," she said ramblingly, her body leaning forward. "Don't hold my arm so tightly, Tamsie. It'll all come out right. You've years ahead of you—you and Phil will piece this all out and understand—and forgive—forgive, I said. I can't talk any louder, Tamsie—forgive—forgive—"

The policeman, shaking her roughly, rapped with his club on the wet sidewalk.

"Here's another 'un," he said to a passerby.

THE PRUDE

By Leon Thomas Stern

"I THINK I will come," Selma promised vaguely, lifting brown eyes to the face of the man embracing her.

His nervous hand clasped her slim fingers with a tenseness repeated in his voice as he said, "When?"

She smiled and blushed. She felt the blush with rather a sense of shame, it seemed so—so *gauche* and unsophisticated, and so she replied positively, "To-night." Her hand was crushed by a tightening of his fingers, then her pink palm was lifted to his lips. A moment later her own lips were against the masculine lips under the rakish, modish little mustache she so admired. A little thrill shook her. For the first time she was really feeling life, truly learning its hidden, entrancing secrets. That forbidden word—another—was now hers, too. Fearfully she returned the pressure of the man's kiss. She felt her head slip to his fashionable unpadded shoulder, her hands were held in two hands browned by outdoor sports.

Outdoor sports! Ah, delightful. Her palms came ecstatically together in a manner habitual to her, "like the two pink petals of a bud," he had once said. He was not much given to aptitude of phrase, for he was an outdoor man. The beauty of his description, therefore, appealed to Selma the more. Her palms, now lightly folded, felt a cold shiver, as it were; something very thin was slipped between them. Selma looked down, to see the thin, irregular edge of a key made to fit into a patent lock. Again she flushed, but now with excitement. And, noting the heightened color in the pretty, youthful face, he bent to her again, covering her mouth with kisses.

"My darling, I've waited so long," he breathed. Her heart leaped. How he must love her to have found the waiting long; he knew her seven weeks. "You must not disappoint me." His voice actually trembled. And she could inspire so grand a passion!

"I will surely come to-night," she repeated, her lips against his ear, his arms

about her. He pressed her to him, then, with a last kiss, just at the nape of her pretty neck, he left.

Long after the door had closed behind him she still held the key in her hands, smiling as if at memories. Now at last real romance had come! Her hidden longings for a "broader concept" were really to be gratified at last. After these eleven drab years with Charles a light was to burst forth in her life. A mysterious secret light it was to be, dangerous, heart-warming. Charles' step past her door roused her. She slipped the key into her blouse hurriedly.

Yet there was really no need of haste. Charles would never think of entering until he had carefully scrubbed the city's grime from his big face and slightly puffed fingers. He would shave, and change his collar and shirt before he came into the room to greet her. Charles had never liked the fuss that is commonly made by wives over their husbands' homecoming. He was a very methodical man, had married late in life, and of course adored the wife who was so much younger than he.

She had been the schoolteacher of a troublesome young relative, for whom he was sent as ambassador of peace by a harassed mother. The restraint and dignity of the pretty little teacher had captivated him. That restraint was yet theirs; she was almost as modest a wife as she had been a maiden. She still observed all the little conventional distances. It was she who introduced to the astonished but admiring man the institution of separate rooms for married people. She still had a prudish aloofness of him that piqued and interested Charles. However, he was much too busy to wonder if she loved him. Indeed, he would not have believed her even had she herself told him that she did not, for he knew that women were nervous creatures who often had queer fancies.

When he came in to her this evening the usual casual kiss was exchanged. Selma felt cheated by Fortune, because she had missed the very climax that she had feared; the possibility of being discovered, key in hand, was, of course, now gone. She almost wished to tell

Charles that her dramatic hour might be intensified and prolonged. But instead he inquired pleasantly, "Dinner ready? I'd like it sooner, please. I won't be able to get a train back home to-night, I'm afraid."

Unconsciously a frown came into her eyes. It was out of the usual order to have dinner even fifteen minutes earlier. She wondered if his business could be in regard to the new houses he had been putting up. Perhaps he was going to sell them all! He had promised to buy an automobile if he did. Her hand came to her bosom. Under the sheerness of her blouse she felt the cool metal of his key. In a rapid succession of thought she realized that she was going to be entirely free for the evening.

Again she felt resentment. She had been looking forward to this occasion, to the planning, the subtle excuses, the excitement, the feeling of *diablerie* as she escaped from the house, the delicious tenseness of the imminence of discovery while there—with him. There had even been the possibility that Charles would become stirred out of his placid self; she flushed as she thought of him as "mad with jealousy." It would have been so thrilling! Before she realized it she was saying,

"Need you go, Charles?"

Charles looked pleased. His wife seldom expressed her pleasure in his presence, and now it really appeared that she was sorry to miss the domestic monotony of the evening with him.

"Yes, dear, I'm sorry, but business——" he regretted. "Come, let's have dinner." Characteristically he took it for granted that what he wished he could have without question. Again she felt resentment. *He* never took anything for granted. A little wavering doubt dispelled itself in her mind. She would go now, without hesitation. She, too, would feel the glory and wonder of a grand passion—at least, for once. During dinner she was abstracted, and when Charles asked her not to be blue she smiled what she thought was a meaningful smile to the cheerful, stout face across the table.

Now at last she was alone. There

was nothing at all to keep her from leaving. Charles was gone, with the assurance, after a perusing of time-tables, that he would not be able to return until next day. His kiss was actually a bit ardent, as he bade her not to worry. Selma's decision was made. She held the key in nervous, trembling fingers. The calm ticking of the huge grandfather clock on its small platform in the corner was strangely slow compared to the irregular beat of her heart. The insistent, monotonous sound drew her gaze to the polished brass face. Why, it was only half-past seven! They had completed dinner very early. She had thought there would be need of hurry, of rushing, but there was "loads of time."

She wondered just how much time there was. He had not told her when she was expected, merely repeating her "to-night." In all the literature upon the subject that she had read—limited, it must be recorded—there was not one word that definitely told the time of arrival. The ladies simply came. Nor was there one person from whose experience Selma might judge; for, so far as she knew, her friends lived lives of deadly, unchanging respectability. The women she knew would not even speak upon improper subjects. That is, as of course you understand, they would not speak openly.

Selma was therefore in a most uncomfortable quandary. Was she expected to spend the evening? Was hers to be a late call—say, with her arrival at ten—as her more fashionable friends did? Or was she to come very late indeed? She could have reproached herself for not having found out before. She almost reproached him—he knew all about such things—for not having told her. She felt that her entrance early might be awkward, perhaps. Yet, how could she leave her home, unescorted by her husband, after eleven? She had not the courage of French fiction heroines: she would not have dared to take her stolid Swedish maid even part way with her. Besides, in the suburbs, as you know, everyone notices everything that is in the least out of the usual and the women do talk so. Selma knew; she herself had

talked also. Although, to be sure, in her heart she had despised the women about her as "prudes," although tyrannical convention and a commonplace husband forbade her to express her real attitude upon conduct and ethics. It would be simple enough to explain her leaving now by speaking of a visit to a relative with whom—she blushed faintly as she thought of it—she had spent the evening.

Yes, it was best to leave now. She ran to her room, re-brushed her hair to a glossier lustre, burnished her shining nails to a pinker brilliance, powdered the lobes of her little ears, and covering all by a sober tan coat and a snug turban and veil, she proceeded to the address he had told her, the key clutched in her hand.

He had a much more pretentious apartment than she had imagined. There were deep chairs, broad couches, soft carpets. Her own home was furnished in the severely Victorian fashion that both she and Charles found customary. She was slightly irritated by the positive carelessness with which the pictures were hung, the untidiness of the heavy drapery hanging upon the chairs and over the doorways, the confusion of cushions on the floor, though she was not entirely unprepared; Marie, her chum, at whose house she had met him, having told her about him, of his travels, his good looks, his love affairs, his "differentness" from other men, his fascination, and his sensational divorce.

Selma had been half afraid to meet him; she had been inexpressive and shy, and consequently appeared to be interestingly distant. To her astonishment she had from the first attracted him. Though she realized that she was pretty, she could not understand what it was in her that appealed to so popular a man. She could not know that the long line of her throat, the sudden small curve of her pretty bust, the delicate turn of her slender hips were almost those of the French women. It was a piquant combination, the rounded unconsciously attractive figure crowned by the pretty face, with its curiously dissatisfied, wistful look veiled by her suburban reserve.

That he never told her, though. He praised her lips and hands and hair, giving her the first compliments she had received since her marriage to Charles. Once, as he knelt to tie her loosened shoe-laces, he remarked upon the slenderness of the feet so unobtrusively shod, and brought a vivid glow to her cheek and throat.

That glow was now again in her face, for wherever her eye fell she saw white or bronze nude forms with curving, alluring limbs. Everywhere pictures repeated, but more daringly, the poses of the sculptured women. She had an uncanny feeling that the creatures were alive, looking at her. It seemed immoral—really—to have such things in one's home. One had statuettes of children, or draped busts, on the mantel, perhaps a head neatly placed upon a pedestal in a corner of a room. But these women! Even in the art museum of their town the ladies always sped past such things when there were gentlemen in the galleries.

To escape the white figures she opened the door into the adjoining room. It was a bedroom, cool and wide. Selma returned hurriedly into the other room. Such long minutes passed. Surely he was expecting her? She wondered that he did not hasten back to see if she were there. Then she remembered that he always had dinner late. And of course—he had told her the previous Sunday that he was dining with the Mordants tonight. She smiled; he had such a dear, intimate way of telling her everything, not at all like Charles, who told her nothing except the results of those of his enterprises that turned out well. She found the thought of Charles strangely disturbing among the lifeless women surrounding her.

The half-hours began to drag interminably. She tried to read, but she had already seen the "best-sellers" scattered on the table and floor, since their friendship had begun and then had grown through his visits in fetching them to her and taking them back. Her French was too poor for her to enjoy the tedious wading through the undoubtedly spicy foreign novels. A few notes on the

piano, struck inaccurately, frightened her with the thought that someone might hear her. She sat down to wait, but minutes had never seemed so long to her. Finally she rose in desperation and timidly entered the bedroom she had so swiftly left before. It was a beautiful room, with shining mirrors and silver appurtenances for the toilet. On the wicker couch by the window lay a lavender silk dressing-gown. Selma lifted it, irresistibly. It was a beautiful color. She could imagine him in it, his eyes an even deeper blue because of the lustrous silk. What a beautiful thing for a man to have! She had never thought that men had pretty things. Surely poor Charles never owned an object bought for his personal use that could be called anything other than expensive and serviceable.

Curiously she opened a mirror-paneled door. Before her there hung suits ranging from daring yellow in color to sober blue street coats, a very rainbow of hues. There were more costumes than she herself possessed. And she had always thought it was the women who were the beautifully clothed. Selma had never studied biology, you see.

What interesting things he had! The dresser with its gleaming silver attracted her eye insistently. In a large frame was the picture of a woman with a mocking little smile on her long and exquisite face. Selma felt a chill: was that the portrait of his divorced wife? Her thoughts became confused, but there emerged the clear, reassuring memory of his words, "I worship you; *my* life is yours."

Was not this dresser then hers, she concluded, her standards temporarily demolished? She carefully opened a bureau drawer. Only neckties. She opened another. He was a most unmethodical man. There lay an untidy heap of fresh handkerchiefs, not at all like Charles' neat geometrical pile, and a mess of papers and pictures.

Her swift fingers caught them eagerly. One after another they returned her gaze—piquant, sad, coquettish, stately, blonde, dark-eyed, dimpled, décolleté, tailored, young and almost middle-aged

—and on each picture stood the same message in varying words and handwriting; each gave her love to her lover—*him*. To *him*. All of them. Why, he was immoral!

But she was here, too! Why—why had she come? She had not thought of that. She had wanted something different, something exciting, something vivid, expressive, and not drab, inexpressive. She had not thought of the precise remedy for her restless secret wishing; she had accepted this adventure without realizing that it meant this! Why, he was a stranger to her!

Whatever would Charles think? With a little cry she ran out into the next room. The wide white eyes of the plaster and marble women stared at her brazenly. What would Charles think if he saw her here? Why, he'd never talk to her again! He might even think it was—low. He might find out about this. He might have come back home after all.

Again the little cry, and catching her hat and veil, she ran down the stairs to the street, and caught a car for home—and Charles.

ORCHIDS AND THE CALL

By Hazel Marjorie Smith

SELF, with Marian Anderson, had evolved from a habit to an art. It is surprising how many women there are who make an art of selfishness; the more so, because it is seldom suspected in them. Contradictorily, Marian was splendidly generous—superficially. It lay with Alan Ramsey to reveal her to herself. This he did with a sublime unconsciousness. He had no more conception of her selfishness than had Marian. If he had, perhaps he would never have loved her; and perhaps he would have loved her just the same.

A trait of selfishness it is to follow an instinct blindly, without making an attempt to grasp the intellectual perception underlying it.

Marian responded to the instinct that drew her, with magnetic force, to Alan Ramsey, and a comprehension of it was wholly lacking in her mind, so replete with culture and refinement. When the time would come for her to marry him, she expected to go on living just as she had always lived; or as she would live if she married Richard Pringle, for instance. Not materially, you understand, since Richard possessed approximately fourteen thousand a year in comparison to Alan's four thousand. Marian believed that she was being wonderfully

self-sacrificing when she consented to live upon four thousand a year, but she loved Alan enough for that. Discarding such considerations, she thought that she would have to give up nothing, because she did not realize the difference between Alan and Richard Pringle.

One afternoon after the *matinée*, she and Alan took a taxicab to one of the hotels for tea. In the lobby Alan met an acquaintance and stopped for a moment to chat with him. He was an unattractive, dark little man, and having acknowledged the introduction, Marian promptly retired to the background to await impatiently the conclusion of his conversation with Alan. Her languid gaze strayed about the lobby, noting, with disdainful, amused, or approving curiosity, the people who lounged in the chairs or sauntered past her and returned ultimately to Alan. There was nobody quite so worth looking at as he, she reflected contentedly. She wished that the man would cease talking to him, so that they could go in to tea. What were they conversing about? She stepped nearer in order to listen. The conversation was unintelligible to her; it concerned business. Alan appeared to be deeply interested. He was talking earnestly, and he gesticulated at intervals to emphasize a statement which he

made. When the man was not speaking himself, he was listening intently to Alan.

Marian shrugged her shoulders and fell back a step. Business did not appeal to her. She felt rather piqued that Alan would relinquish even a few moments of her time to converse with that objectionable person upon so dull a subject. He actually seemed to have forgotten her! She glanced at the clock. Five minutes had passed since they had entered the hotel. Well! she would wait for two more minutes, and then she would remind Alan that she was there, and that she certainly did not enjoy standing in a hotel lobby while he ignored her to talk business. It was unbelievably impolite of him. Inconceivable it was that a gentleman would conduct himself in such a manner. Certainly Dick Pringle would never do it; he was invariably thoughtful of her comfort.

"I'm sure Dick wouldn't keep me standing here, even if he met the Czar of Russia," she reminded herself, cap-tiously. "When I am with him, *he* never thinks of anyone but me for a moment. Alan is fearfully selfish. It's a positive insult to me for him to ignore me this way!"

While she tapped her foot uneasily, she watched the clock. No sooner were the two minutes up than she decided to wait for another two minutes before she spoke to Alan. Vehemently indignant with herself she was because of the palpable weakness which she was displaying. In Marian's estimation there was nothing so despicable as a woman who permits a man to intimidate her. But she felt powerless. Irritably she admitted it to herself.

With a smothered exclamation of anger, she glanced about for a chair and sat down to wait. She was facing the clock. With each dragging moment her resentment increased. How *dare* he neglect her so? As soon as they were alone she would assure him, icily, that she was not accustomed to neglect, and had absolutely no intention of ever becoming accustomed to it. "I've never had anyone treat me this way before!" she told

herself in a rage. "I—can't understand it!"

That was the truth. In Marian's twenty-two years of sheltered, pampered existence, she had always come first in everything. Her father perpetually conceded to the demands of his only offspring. Her adoring mother regarded Marian's wishes as her law. She had even been known to forego a meeting of her bridge club because Marian required her assistance in the selection of a frock of which she had suddenly discovered the imperative need. To appreciate this, one must know Mrs. Anderson. Bridge whist was the shrine at which she burned the incense of her fealty.

With regard to Marian's admirers—Dick Pringle was an excellent example! As you already know, Dick was possessed—and obsessed—by fourteen thousand a year. Aside from paying the most devout homage to himself and incidentally to Marian or another of her sex, he had absolutely no ulterior motive in living. Alan was the only man whom Marian had ever met who differed from Richard Pringle in that respect. Moreover, Alan was the only man who had ever permitted himself to become interested in anyone but Marian while in her society. As to *what* he was interested in—an ugly little swarthy man with an extraordinarily disagreeable manner and—

At this juncture of her indignant musings, she was interrupted by Alan bidding a hasty farewell to the man and coming toward her with an assured and arrogant suggestion that they seek the tea room.

Marian glanced accusingly at the clock and made a swift mental calculation which resulted in the condemning apprehension that she had been waiting for exactly seventeen minutes and a half. She opened her mouth with a cutting reproof on the tip of her tongue. When her eyes met Alan's she closed her mouth and swallowed the reproof with a gulp.

A moment later, Alan following close beside her, she led the way into the tea room.

When they had finished tea, they took

a taxi to Marian's home. Every other block Marian assured herself, gravely, that she had refrained from speaking to Alan about his neglect merely because they had been in a hotel lobby, and a well-bred person *never* argues when there are others nearby. When they reached the house she would lead him into the drawing-room and close the door and—

She did, but that was as far as she got. The moment that the door was closed Alan took her in his arms and drew her down upon the davenport beside him and kissed her. After that she could not remember what in the world she had intended saying to him.

"Look here, Marian," observed he, presently, "I was looking at a bungalow yesterday that is just about what we want. The man who built it has to go abroad in a month or so. I told him I'd take you out to look it over some day soon. What do you say?"

"All right," nodded Marian tranquilly. "Will Tuesday do? Is the living room large, Alan, and is there a fireplace? You know, dear, that I have my heart set on a fireplace."

"You'd get it there," reflected Alan. "There are two of them. There's one in the dining room, as well."

Ecstatically Marian clasped her hands.

"How perfectly wonderful! Won't we have ducky little dinners, just you and I together? But you'll not be home for lunch, will you, Alan?"

"No," said Alan, "I won't be able to get home for lunch. I'll have to take my lunch in town. And, Marian," he added, rather eagerly, "how about breakfast? I—I don't suppose you'll be likely to get up for breakfast?"

Marian squealed,

"What? Get up at seven-thirty in the morning? I should say not! I'd be dead all day. I never rise until ten, at least!"

"I didn't suppose that you would," conceded Alan, "but—do you suppose——" he hesitated wistfully. "Do you suppose—if I kissed you before I came into town in the mornings, that I'd waken you? I won't see you all day,

you know," he hastened in explanation. "And I'd—like to!"

"You dear old darling!" laughed Marian. "Of course you'll not waken me—if you're careful not to."

When Alan had gone, she sat in the darkened drawing-room, smiling tenderly to herself.

"Just think of that!" she murmured. "Would it waken me if he kissed me in the mornings! Oh, dear," she sighed, happily. "Isn't that just like Alan? Now, Dick Pringle would *never* think of saying anything so perfectly sweet."

Since Dick Pringle never rose before eleven, he probably never would. Furthermore, Dick never permitted himself to think of anyone but Richard Pringle, Jr., before one o'clock in the afternoon. It interfered with his digestion to make use of his mentality before the lunch hour. By thinking of himself exclusively he avoided that appalling calamity.

Came, two weeks later, the day of all the year that is most sacred to the memory of lovers; or perhaps to say "sentimentalists" would be more appropriate.

Besides several valentines in the disguise of bonbon boxes, or several bonbon boxes in the disguise of valentines, as you prefer, Marian was the recipient of numerous lovely orchids. The card enclosed in the box triumphantly boasted the name of Richard Pringle.

Alan's valentine was conspicuous because of its absence.

He even failed to call her upon the telephone.

Vindictively Marian assented to the Pringle plea that she attend the Opera that evening; and she even went so far as to permit Richard to hold her hand on the way home in the limousine, with its neatly distinctive "R. P., Jr.," monogrammed upon the door. Devoutly she longed for Alan to see, and, seeing, repent.

The following day, when Alan came to call, she wore the orchids, droopily withered now.

"Aren't they lovely?" she asked fervently, as she buried her nose in their depths. Rather annoyed she was because the moisture from the orchids got all over her nose. It is difficult to be

fervid when one has to stop in the midst of the proceeding to rub one's face vigorously.

"Humph!" grunted Alan. "They were lovely when they were fresh."

Ignoring the interruption, she resumed, with a far-away expression which was intended to be fondly reminiscent:

"They were a remembrance from Dick Pringle. We attended the Opera last night."

"Oh, that little shrimp!" Alan growled. "Isn't he an awful bore?"

"He certainly is *not*," contradictorily. "Dick Pringle is a *gentleman*."

Alan chuckled,

"That wouldn't prevent him from being a bore. Why the devil was he sending you a remembrance yesterday?"

"Valentine's Day!" informed Marian, sweetly.

"Was it, though?" stared Alan. "I didn't know that! I thought that Valentine's Day was in March. Speaking of yesterday, I put through a big deal, Marian. Lord knows I worked hard enough at it. That's why I didn't telephone. I hadn't time."

"Oh!" said Marian, flippantly. "Is that the reason? Now that I think of it, you didn't call yesterday, did you?"

"No," he repeated curtly, "I didn't!"

Well, the day that he neglected her in the hotel was bad enough; and his shocking disregard for St. Valentine's Day was worse; but the straw that broke the camel's back, as the saying goes, was what happened on the following Wednesday. Always, on Wednesday nights, they went to the theatre. On this particular Wednesday Alan telephoned at noon and told her to expect him at eight. At eight ten Marian was impatiently awaiting him; at eight thirty she was angrily denouncing him; at eight forty—words are inadequate to convey a correct impression of Marian's emotions at eight forty!

Ten minutes later the telephone rang. It was long distance. Also it was Alan. His voice came faintly over the wire in regretful explanation. He had gone out into the country that afternoon upon important business concerning a lease, and the machine had broken down on the way back to town. He was miles away

from a telephone, and consequently frantic—Marian sniffed contemptuously at that—because he knew that she would be awaiting him. She scarcely heard the remainder of his conversation. The moment that she had hung up the receiver she flounced into a chair before her writing-desk in a frenzied rage and proceeded to write him a note. When she had made seven attempts, and had torn each attempt into tiny pieces, she finally succeeded in expressing herself satisfactorily.

"My dear Mr. Ramsey (the note read coolly): After many weeks of thoughtful consideration, I have come to the conclusion that we are unsuited to one another, and we had best make an attempt to forget that any feeling aside from friendship has ever existed between us. I am quite sure that we could never be happy together. You will do me a favor by believing that this is absolutely final.

"MARIAN HELEN ANDERSON."

She sealed and stamped the letter and gave it to one of the maids to post immediately. When the door had closed upon the maid and the letter she restrained, with difficulty, an overpowering impulse to run after her and snatch it away and tear it into a thousand pieces. Sternly she warned herself:

"Don't be a little fool! He doesn't care a snap of his fingers for you. If he did, he wouldn't go out into the country and take a chance of not getting back, when he knew that he had an engagement with you. Marian Anderson, you could *never* be happy with that man. He doesn't love you, and this proves it! Dick Pringle wouldn't do such a thing in a million years. Dick is a *gentleman*, and he is very much in love with you. So just forget Alan Ramsey!"

Odd, isn't it, how you can convince yourself that you are capable of forgetting a person, and still you persist in thinking about him?

For the succeeding two days Marian went about in a haze. What surprised and worried her most of all was the fact that she did not hear a word from Alan

Ramsey. Suppose that he should take her seriously, and consider that letter as "absolutely final"!

But wasn't that just what she wanted him to do? Of course it was!

On Saturday morning she dressed for the street and went out to take a long walk. She felt that perhaps she would be able to think more clearly in the open air. When she reached the Drive she had an inspiration. Why not go up to see Alicia Rutherford and tell her all about it? Something subtly comforting always hovered around Mrs. Rutherford. There was nothing she could not understand.

Marian quickened her footsteps and presently reached her destination.

Mrs. Rutherford was bathing the baby when she arrived. But she evinced a willingness, almost an eagerness, to hear what Marian had to say. So she left the baby in care of the nurse and led the defiant, petulant Marian into the living room. She closed the door.

Briefly she demanded,

"What's the trouble? Alan?"

Marian stared in speechless consternation.

"How did you know?" dubiously.

"Well," explained Mrs. Rutherford speculatively, "at your age it's nearly always a man. In your case, to my knowledge, there are just two of any importance at present: Alan and Dick Pringle. Dick is—well, he's just Dick Pringle! So it must be Alan."

Marian drew a long, tense breath.

"It is," she admitted vehemently.

"All right," nodded Mrs. Rutherford. "Now sit down and tell me all about it."

So Marian sat down and stormily poured the tale of her woe into Mrs. Rutherford's sympathetic ears; while Mrs. Rutherford, displaying not the slightest desire to interrupt her, listened with an earnest intensity that satisfied even Marian's exacting sense of justice.

Alicia Rutherford candidly confessed to the age of thirty-five. She appeared nearly ten years younger. She possessed a depth of comprehension and a broadened sense of humor that many women lack at forty-five. Passionately devoted to her three children, she was not de-

voted to them in complete exclusion to other things of less importance.

Tom Rutherford was the personification of a type, but Alicia had not realized this when she married him. The realization had gradually dawned upon her with the passing years. After all, there are advantages in being married to a type. One knows what to expect.

First and last, Tom Rutherford was a business man. He was practical, and he cherished ideals. Frequently a practical person does cherish ideals, although one would not always suppose so.

He was not complex; just the opposite. There was no further need for analysis, when one had analyzed sufficiently to comprehend that he was a type. Alicia had done this, and had dealt with him accordingly.

In the early months of their marriage, before she had come to understand Tom, she had been distressfully hurt by his trivial neglectfulness. Nowadays she laughed over the recollection of their first wedding anniversary. She had fallen to sleep the night before wrapped in an ineffable blanket of sweet content and confidence. The morrow would mark the first mile-post in their life together, symbolizing many years of happiness to come. Hungrily she had wondered what Tom's token of remembrance would be; perhaps red roses. He knew how she loved red roses. Or he might be extravagant enough for something more expensive. He really shouldn't, but if he were—well, an event of so much importance justified extravagance!

In the morning she had awakened with a delightful sense of expectation. It puzzled her that Tom did not mention the celebration of their wedding anniversary. He ate his breakfast calmly, just as though it were any other morning; and when he was leaving for the office he kissed her with no more and no less affection than he was in the habit of displaying ordinarily.

When he was turning the knob of the door she had called him back.

"T—Tom," she had faltered, "what date is it, dear?"

"Date?" She smiled now as she remembered the blank expression on his

face. "Why, it's the fifteenth, isn't it? Of course, it's the fifteenth! This is the day that my insurance is due. I was thinking about that last night."

"Why, yes, so it is," she had answered, attempting to conceal the disappointment which had pierced her with his commonplace reply. "So it is!"

When he was gone she had returned to the dining room and wept a few miserable, furtive tears. Then she had dried her eyes determinedly and proceeded about the housework with an enforced cheerfulness. How silly she was being! Of course he remembered. He was only making a pretense of having forgotten in order to surprise her later in the day.

That day had been an agony to Alicia. Every time the doorbell rang she had hastened to answer it with her heart fluttering hopefully in her breast—and had returned to the kitchen with a sickening dejection after paying the gas bill or assuring an enthusiastic agent that she had no need of a Complete Edition of Somebody or Other's Works.

Tom had come home as usual at the dinner hour. He had made no mention of their anniversary. Alicia was so hurt, so completely crushed, that presently Tom had noticed her depression and demanded an explanation. She had wept out the reason in his arms. He had laughed at her, and kissed and petted her. Then he had gone out and returned with two dozen magnificent roses. Regretfully admitting that it had slipped his mind, he had made a solemn avowal that it would never happen again. Of course it had happened again, innumerable times. But the sting in the hurt had gradually lessened until there was nothing left except tender and tolerant amusement and a vaguely rueful philosophy.

These were the memories that were surging in Alicia's mind while Marian was relating her story.

When Marian had come to a stumbling finish, Mrs. Rutherford leaned toward her with her hands clasped tightly in her lap. There was just the suggestion of a twinkle in her eyes. But Marian saw only the seriousness.

"Marian," began Mrs. Rutherford, slowly, as though she were carefully choosing her words, "Marian, there's something I'd like to explain to you. It never occurred to me until now that you had not considered it. I'm going to take Alan as an example, and try to throw some light upon another side of the question.

"Alan has been exceptionally successful in his business career, hasn't he? I've heard several people remark it. Well, my dear, don't you suppose that he has had to sacrifice something for that success? Hasn't he had to give up a great deal, and make himself a secondary consideration in order to accomplish that? He doesn't pamper himself like your little friend Dick Pringle, does he? He doesn't spend his time and money upon himself and his pleasures; he spends it upon his work! Otherwise he would never have done so much as he has.

"If you consider it, Marian," she resumed, "you will realize that nobody has ever accomplished anything worth while until they placed attainment above themselves. Did you ever stop to think of the many years that an opera singer dedicates to her art, and of the sacrifices that she makes?

"If you ever expect to marry Alan Ramsey, being his wife will become an art with you, as much as singing is an art with a grand opera favorite; unless, of course, you prefer to make an art of selfishness. Many do. But there is a splendid elation in the realization that one has accomplished something by self-sacrifice.

"Marian," she then asked, tentatively, "Do you ever hope to be a mother?"

"Why—yes!" faltered Marian, blankly. "Of course I do! You know that I love children, Mrs. Rutherford. Why?"

Mrs. Rutherford laughed quietly.

"Have you ever noticed the habit I have of considering Tommy and Grace and Baby before everything else?"

The angry, disdainful Marian of a short while since was wholly submerged in an air of bewilderment and humility.

"Of course I've noticed it, lots of times!"

"Well," said Mrs. Rutherford, gently, "that's the reason. A mother is never a real mother unless she makes herself a secondary consideration, any more than a wife is a real wife, or a man is a real business man, under any other circumstances. When Alan is seemingly neglecting you for business, it is really himself whom he is making a secondary consideration, because he is relinquishing your society, and that's what he enjoys above everything else. I hope that you'll not regard this as a lecture, dear, because I'm only telling you what I have learned from experience. I understand how you felt piqued when Alan left you standing in the lobby that day while he discussed business, because I used to feel the same way when I was first married, and Tom would sit at the breakfast table with his nose buried in the paper, reading the news of the stock exchange instead of talking to me. But I got over that, fortunately. Of course, I don't doubt that Dick Pringle is more attentive than Alan in trivial things, but when it comes to the big things! Being married to Alan might not be so satisfactory in a way, but you may be sure that the compensations would counterbalance everything. There isn't any comparison, Marian! Now, run along home and think this over, and I wager that it will come out all right."

"But—it can't come out all right," wailed Marian, almost in tears. "Because I've sent him that letter!"

Mrs. Rutherford laughed.

"No matter! He'll come around. Just see if he doesn't."

As soon as Marian had left, Mrs. Rutherford went to the telephone and called Alan.

Twenty minutes later he breathlessly entered the living room, where she was awaiting him.

"I took a taxi," he explained, diffidently, as he glanced about the room with a detached nervousness. Then, "Has—has Marian been here?" he blurted.

"Alan," said Mrs. Rutherford, severely, "I gave you credit for more sense than you have been displaying lately."

"What have I done? Was Marian here?"

"She was, and she was feeling very badly. She told me all about your neglect, and the poor child thinks it means that you don't love her. You left her standing in the lobby while you discussed business one day. You forgot to send her a Valentine. Last Wednesday you deliberately broke an engagement with her. And then, when she wrote you a letter, you ignored both it and her!"

As she hurled the accusations at him, Alan drew back as though he were receiving so many violent, bewildering blows.

"Didn't you do all of that?" persisted Mrs. Rutherford.

"Why, yes!" admitted Alan, with a gulp. "But I didn't mean to neglect her, Mrs. Rutherford. You see," hastened he, in anxious interpretation, "I had to talk to Hopkins in the lobby, because if I hadn't I might not have had another chance! I'll take an oath that I didn't know it was Valentine's Day, Mrs. Rutherford. How the deuce can I keep track of such things? And I certainly expected to get back on Wednesday night. I can't help it when a machine breaks down!"

"But the letter; why didn't you answer it?"

There was real suffering in Alan's eyes as he replied, slowly:

"What was there that I could say? I considered it from every possible viewpoint, and I decided if she didn't want to marry me—well, she just didn't love me! It never occurred to me that she was angry about those foolish, unimportant things!"

"Alan," remarked Mrs. Rutherford, wisely, "the easiest way to kill a woman's love is by neglecting to bestow trivial considerations upon her."

Alan passed his hand across his eyes in a gesture of perplexity.

"Lord, but girls are queer!"

Readily she agreed:

"Indeed they are! And don't ever forget it again."

"I won't!" declared he, positively. "But what had I better do, Mrs. Rutherford?"

Briskly Alicia advised:

"Better send her some flowers this afternoon, and go out to call to-night."

"Are you sure—she'll be willing to see me?"

"Try it and see," she suggested.

"What shall I send her?" he blundered, "o-orchids?"

"Heavens, no!" groaned Alicia. "If you're hoping for a reconciliation, don't do anything to remind her of Richard Pringle."

Alicia closed her eyes. A reminiscent smile slowly touched her lips.

"If I were you, I'd send her—red roses," said she, very softly.

"All right, I'll try it!"

"By the way," added Mrs. Rutherford, "you need not tell Marian that you had this talk with me."

When Alan had gone, she stood by the window for a long while, gazing out thoughtfully into the street.

"Of course," mused she, "I don't suppose for a moment that either of them will observe my advice for the remainder of their lives. They'll just continue to be themselves! But what I said may have made enough impression to recur at intervals. At least, it will bring them together again, and that's of the most importance. They can climb over the rough places themselves. Of course the rough places are very unpleasant, but

they won't do any harm in the end if—fiddlesticks!" protested Alicia inelegantly. "There is no use in trying to philosophize with myself. I may as well admit it. The rough places may seem amusing now, but they were nothing less than tragic in other days. These mental growing pains aren't any fun!"

Although Marian did not express it to herself in words, her sentiments, as she sat on the davenport that night with Alan's arm around her, and her head on Alan's shoulder, were somewhat similar to Mrs. Rutherford's. Intensely Marian was realizing that "mental growing pains aren't any fun!"

Two words in her language there were, which Marian had detested and avoided all her life. It seemed, after all of her dodging, that they were actually about to overtake her. The words were "duty" and "responsibility."

She sighed. Alan's arm tightened about her. Marian's head was bent. She was looking at the red, red rose that was pinned above her heart.

"Alan," whispered she, in swift resolve, "Alan, you needn't be afraid of waking me when you kiss me good-by in the mornings. I—I've decided to get up for breakfast when we're married; and I think I'll start to rise early, beginning with to-morrow, so that I'll be sure to have formed the habit!"

EMMY THROWS A STONE

By Lina S. Bernstein

THAT afternoon, as always, it was with an acute and special pleasure that Emmy McWade prepared her baby for an appearance on the street. There was more than mere motherliness in it. As she brushed the already abundant hair and stuffed the uncertain, tiny arms into their sleeves, her eyes took in with keen delight the charming outline of the baby cheek, the tiny dimples near the corners of the delicious lips. It was so distinctly hers this baby. She had only to raise her eyes to the mirror to see again the

perfect fulfillment of which the baby was the rich promise.

"Nothing of your father about *you*," said Emmy to the baby, with the abandon of a child who calls names when all alone, knowing that nobody can hear and punish.

With her baby over her shoulder she made her way downstairs to the nook in the rear of the hall where several of the apartment baby carriages yawned empty for their charges. She singled out her own little wicker buggy and in two more minutes she was trundling it

through the front door on her way to the elevated station several blocks away. There it was her dutiful custom to await her husband on his return from downtown in the late afternoon.

She took up a position at the foot of the long stairway just outside of its projecting roof. A stream of workers was already cascading down, poured out by the rumbling cars overhead. To Emmy's line of vision, including only the half-dozen bottommost steps, there suddenly appeared pairs of apparently unconnected legs; young legs tilting down in sharply pressed trousers; others accommodating their haste to wide, entangling skirts; here a pair of flat and weary feet planting themselves with care on each successive step; over by the railing an inadequate, misshapen foot dividing its burden with a crutch; all eagerly bearing their owners to resting-place and supper.

"Seems to me," said Emmy, addressing the baby for want of a more responsive companion, "seems to me gaiter-top shoes are all the go this season."

Her interest in the footgear had prevented her from glancing up at the shifting screen of faces, so it was with surprise that she lifted her head as a voice addressed her suddenly.

"Why, how pleasant to see you here, Mrs. McWade! And the little one, too!"

Emmy found herself looking into two wide-open brown eyes on a level only a little above her own.

"If it isn't Mr. Harpen, I declare!" she exclaimed, putting her hand into his extended one. "And how do you come to be getting off at our particular station? It isn't just to see poor us, I'm sure!"

"There, now, I really hoped you wouldn't be angry." A slight shade fell across the quick enthusiasm of the young man's face. "Honestly, this is the first evening I've felt free to take off in months. I thought—why, Mr. McWade knows I've been fearfully busy. I could never have hoped to make any progress at all if I hadn't kept my nose to the grindstone."

"Yes, I've heard that sort of thing before," said Emmy, with a face of

pretty pique, "nice, good, hard-working young man slaving away night and day, and not able to steal an hour or two to call on his old friends."

"But I've been dropping in at your husband's office almost every week," he protested, and knew at once that he shouldn't have said it.

An expression came into being on Emmy's face, a genuine one this time, and not quite so pretty, perhaps.

"Oh, yes, of course, that doesn't surprise me at all. Arthur is real interesting company, isn't he?" She bent over to adjust the baby, who was uncomfortable and kicked an active protest.

To the blunderer's unhappy eye even the smartly arranged knot of hair at the back of her head seemed to bristle with offense.

"Now, really, Mrs. McWade, I'm afraid I've made you angry with me again." He was frankly distressed. "It isn't that I haven't wanted to see you, too, all this time. It's only that I feel that I've got to report progress to him every now and then. You know that if it weren't for him I'd never have been anything but the twelve-dollar clerk you first knew me."

Emmy, always transitory in the entertainment of emotions, regarded the young man with a face no longer offended, but full of curiosity.

"Why, I don't know why you should feel under such awfully great obligations to Arthur."

He looked at her with a simple surprise.

"I guess you don't really understand, Mrs. McWade. Here was I, a man grown, working on a level with twelve-dollar boys. It didn't take much to make them happy. A new tie or the latest step in the maxixe would do it. But if you're choked with the feeling that you're made for bigger things and yet have to go on walking the same little treadmill, you get to feeling lost, helpless, as helpless as a caterpillar on a city pavement which trembles at every huge foot hanging over it. And pretty soon you get indifferent and almost wish the foot would come down hard and put an end to it once for all."

The full force of this outburst of naïve imagery was lost on Emmy, but she was not impervious to the appeal of the young eyes which supplemented so expressively what he was trying to say, nor of the mouth, so absurdly Cupid-bowed, which was saying it.

"I wonder I never noticed before how really good looking he is," was her unspoken thought.

But he was going on in the exploration of his memory. For the moment he seemed almost unconscious of her.

"And just when I was about to give in the chance came, the one chance. I knew it was the last one; something seemed to tell me that. I had to seize hold then or give up altogether. I had gotten hold of an idea, something I could manufacture; only a trifle, but a thing every one would want. And then I realized that the whole thing was impossible."

"Why was that?" asked Emmy, interested.

"Because to start manufacturing even in the tiniest way I had to have at least a thousand dollars. And it might have been a hundred thousand as far as my getting it was concerned. It was a pretty black time for me, you may believe. Why, if Mr. McWade hadn't done what he did——"

"Arthur advanced you a thousand dollars?" Emmy was quite incapable of keeping the immense, shattering astonishment out of her voice.

It brought Arnold Harpen back to the present with a jerk.

"But Mrs. McWade—didn't you know—didn't Mr. McWade——?" His eyes were quite frightened.

Emmy's brain, taxed with the necessity, worked very hard and fast during the next few moments. She could not, somehow, cheapen herself so far in this young man's eyes as to admit that her husband had left her out of his confidence in so important a matter. Nor could she vent the intense irritation that possessed her upon Arnold Harpen. She realized acutely that she was not angry with *him*. It was this consideration which smoothed her forehead and relaxed her lips.

"Besides," the young man was beginning to stammer, "I've——"

"Why, of course I knew all about it," she spoke in a lightly cheerful tone, smiling directly into his eyes to dissipate their trouble, "and I was awfully glad, too, that Arthur had a chance to help you get on your feet. Don't suppose he hasn't told me how wonderfully you have been doing."

He was quick to respond to the change in her, more, perhaps, because of an inner prompting of cheer than her reassuring words.

"That's lovely of you," he said eagerly, "and just what I might have expected. Besides, it doesn't make much difference now, because I've paid nearly all of it back. Why, even to-night, I've brought something toward——"

"Talking to the little woman, eh?" broke in a new voice from over their heads, a mellow voice under its tired, surface hoarseness. "And forgetting to watch out for the poor, tired old man who knows he's all of half an hour late."

Emmy turned to her husband with a little, startled jump. A change came over her face like the drawing up of a veil, a look which accentuated at once the childishness and the petulance of its curves.

"You are late, Arthur," she said; "we'd better be getting on home or Mr. Harpen will think I mean to starve him."

The newcomer was already greeting the younger man with a pleasant heartiness.

"That's fine, Arnold. About time you found your way up to the home. And was the wife glad to see you or only glad of the chance to scold you for not having seen you sooner?"

"I'm afraid the latter, Mr. McWade," responded Arnold, with a smile singularly like the other's for all the difference in the structure of their faces.

The father transferred his attention to the baby, who had been giving lively signs of interest in the proceedings.

"Now, now, of course she wants papa to say 'How do?' And she wants a kiss, too, doesn't she, and to have her cheek pinched? There, I knew it!"

His face was one broad mask of unashamed, fatherly delight.

"Do stop being silly and come home," said Emmy, somewhat impatiently, and settled the matter by trundling off the baby while the men fell into step on either side of her.

Her husband and the visitor had a good deal to say to each other, she noticed at once. And the matter of their talk was so uninteresting as to cause her to wonder at the young man's enthusiasm, consisting of such things as "overhead costs and by-products." But by the end of the short walk to their apartment, Emmy was more than ever convinced that Arnold Harpen was beyond doubt a quite exceptionally good-looking young man, not the less so that he did not seem to realize this fact as an asset.

"I wonder why Arthur is letting himself get so stout," thought Emmy.

The baby went to sleep with that docility which was as yet her only clearly marked characteristic, and Emmy was free to serve her menfolk their evening meal. It was a task which was becoming to her, the slight bustle serving only to ruffle her hair and bring the waiting color into her cheeks, without the usual prosaic accompaniment of polishing her nose. But her keen consciousness of these pleasant facts was somewhat overcast on this occasion. For she could not help being aware that these charms were in a manner wasted. From her husband, to be sure, there emanated an aura of quiet enjoyment and affection, which played about and embraced her with almost visible tentacles. But then, as Emmy impatiently phrased it, "he would be just as fond of me if I had a long nose and knuckly fingers."

Nor was the guest's attitude particularly satisfactory to her. It wasn't that he ignored her. Rather, indeed, in his tremendous love and gratitude to her husband, he seemed to regard her with delighted approval as the very acme and flower of his friend's possessions.

"He likes me and he thinks I'm nice-looking, too," thought Emmy, with a clearness of perception which was somehow uncomfortable to her, "but only be-

cause he's glad that Arthur's got that kind of wife."

And somehow she seemed to sense a challenge.

Later in the evening the men immersed themselves in a game of chess under a circular glow of light which illuminated the deliberate movements of their hands, and now and then brought into relief an expanse of forehead or the strong curve of an upper lip, as one or the other leaned forward in the exigencies of the game. Emmy faced them across the table, and her hands also were active within the radiations of the bulbs. But these hands were engaged in a minute and delicate task, and might have suggested to an observer two gently hovering white butterflies, were it not for the incongruous sting of the fine, flickering needle.

Suddenly and with startling effect the baby woke up with a cry. Emmy looked at her husband.

"Go and see to her, Arthur," she said; "you know she won't stop for me. Besides, I should think Mr. Harpen must be tired of that stupid game."

"Oh, but I'm not!" exclaimed the latter, surprised.

"Oh, well, maybe Emmy thinks we haven't been paying enough attention to her," said the husband good-humoredly as he made off in the direction of the sounds, which were becoming more insistent every minute.

Arnold seemed confused as he met her eye.

"I'm afraid I've been rude again," he half apologized, "but Mr. McWade plays a game you've got to keep your mind on, you know."

"Oh, I guess you can hold your own," she said. "Didn't I hear him say you were winning?—Ouch!" she then exclaimed suddenly but not loudly, and held up a finger on which was forming a large, red drop. "There! I've pricked myself, and pretty badly, too."

He leaned forward sympathetically.

"Hain't you better use your handkerchief?" he asked. "Wait a minute, here's mine. Better tie it up quickly or you'll spoil that pretty work of yours."

Clumsily she tried to use the handker-

chief, but only managed to prick herself again, having forgotten to put down the needle.

"Dear me, that's dreadful! Here, let me!" He was beside her, holding the punctured hand and wiping off the little drops with the anxious care of a man trying to remove superfluous drops of water from a rose.

The little hand lay at rest on his palm as if to ease its hurt. Never afterwards was he able to fix in his mind the precise moment when, as if unconsciously, he closed his fingers over it. Perhaps it was the first time that it had been given him to realize that women's hands are small and soft.

When he looked up, he met her eyes. They were very wide and blue and quite articulate, and they spoke to him in a language new and strange and very bewildering. Something within him seemed to detach itself and go out at his eyes to meet the look in hers.

Very slowly he laid her hand back on the table and a moment later Arthur McWade was back in the room. Subconsciously they had heard him during all the preceding moments as he soothed the baby back to sleep.

Arnold left very soon after that, contrary to the protests of both husband and wife. There was a high note in the latter's voice as she bade him good night which had not been there earlier in the evening. Perhaps it was in response to the look on his face, although the full significance of it was lost on her. She could read the struggling awakening of delight, but not the pain, the shock, the shamed forlornness as his eye half fell before her husband's.

To Emmy the succeeding weeks carried full store of palpitating experience. She lived an inner life made up of recollections and awaitings, only rising to the surface now and again to cast critical eyes upon her husband, at his comfortable waistline and his matter-of-fact affection for her. Quite frequently, too, she recalled with undiminished resentment the fact that he had not seen fit to take her into his confidence on the matter of his loan to Arnold. It was a thing

she had never mentioned to her husband, and she no longer regretted that he had lost the power to thrill her. For another man's hand was in hers, and she was leading him down by slow and tiny steps, while she held his eyes with her own to prevent him from seeing the path. Her guiding had to be very delicate and careful, for the man hesitated between the island of flaming emotion and the waters of realized ingratitude, which sprang for him and threatened to wrest him forever from her grasp. Her constant thought was that he was very good-looking and very elusive, and that she was frightfully fond of him.

And as yet he had never kissed her on the lips.

There came an evening on which her husband had planned with her to visit his parents, it being an anniversary. And the baby was to be allowed to sleep much during the day so as to be fit and sweet-tempered for the night time. But a complete upset threatened this pleasant prospect, for Arthur McWade arrived home to a disorganized household and a pale wife stretched on a couch with a wet towel over her closed eyes.

He was a handy man, this Arthur, and he disposed of a hasty supper of odds and ends, and ministered to her sympathetically but cheerfully, for it wasn't in him to be gloomy.

"And I'll call up the folks and explain," he said, without regret for their disappointment.

Emmy raised herself on an elbow and opened her eyes.

"But you don't mean to say you're not going, Arthur! Why, you'll completely spoil the evening for them!"

"What! Go out and leave a prostrated wife to the horrors? Stuff! Here I stay, and ma and dad will forgive me when they hear the reason."

She sat up and looked at him. Her eyes were wide and brilliant.

"Arthur, you're going to your parents'! And what's more, you'll take the baby. What will the anniversary be to them without her? And you needn't worry about me. It's only a headache, after all, if it is a bad one. I'll be better

off lying still in the dark with no one fussing over me."

She had had no real anxiety as to managing it, and events proved her right, for he allowed himself to be persuaded. A quarter of an hour later he kissed her and left, with the delighted baby on his shoulder. Nor was this the first time that she had put his gullibility to the test.

It occurred to Emmy as she stepped into the street that the misty sky seemed to press upon the earth and make it smaller somehow and more intimate. Her heart, which beat so heavily and with so much noise, seemed to send all its blood into her face. She felt it hot when she touched it with her hand.

She caught sight of Arnold before he saw her. His attitude, as he half leaned on the pillar of the park railing, did not suggest the triumphant lover. But she was not dismayed. Often had she been thrilled by the change which her presence worked on him.

She touched his arm to announce herself, and he started so violently as almost to frighten her. But the change she expected came immediately. It was more than that; it was an irradiation; a widening of his eyes to their utmost limits, as if the more easily to take in the lovely fact of her; a pallor which reached his very lips.

They turned into the park for their accustomed walk, and they walked close together in a palpitant consciousness of each other. But while he seemed scarcely able to say a word, she talked much and fast and in a half-hysterical tone of excitement.

"Well, I've come again, as you asked me to, and I hope you're satisfied. Really, Arnold, I wonder why I come at all. You don't do much to entertain me."

By the dim park lights she saw his eyes. He was looking at her lips as if fascinated by their motion.

"And you ought to know it's no joke, getting away from the house as I do. I've got to keep thinking up ways and means all the time. And it wouldn't be necessary at all if you weren't so obstinate. I can't for the life of me see

why you can't come up to the flat. Besides, Arthur's really——"

"Oh, don't! Why do you have to bring him in?"

His smothered words made plain to Emmy that not yet had he ceased to struggle. And she began to feel a fierce impatience with his dallying. Each time she saw him she felt that the ground gained in the last interview had to be fought for all over again.

"Arnold, for goodness' sake——" she burst out, but stopped short. Perhaps it was the sound of her own heightened voice striking on her ear. No, this was not the way. To bring that look of distress to his face only banished from it the expression she loved to see there. Not that it wasn't attractive to her even when unhappy.

They had by this time arrived at a nook, a bald, uninteresting spot in the daytime, with its couple of benches occupied by nursemaids or beery idlers, but magical now under the rustling leaves in its suggestion of dim aloofness, of escape from an inquisitive world.

Its atmosphere reached her and soothed her irritability. She no longer wanted to scold. She wanted intensely to sit by his side on one of those benches, and to run her hand through the thick, boyish waves of his hair.

"Arnold," she said; only one word, but she tried to throw into it all her feeling for him, all the sweet demands she could make upon him if only he would let her.

"Arnold, sit down here near me."

All his misery and all his resolution seemed to melt from him. He could not resist her when she spoke like this.

"It's so beautiful and quiet here, isn't it? Why don't you say something to me?"

She let her head drop until her ear touched his shoulder. The beating of his heart vibrated to her like the noise of distant waves.

"Arnold, look at me! Oh, why do you make me say it all? Why don't you speak?"

Slowly he bent his head until his eyes looked into hers. She could see his face strangely convulsed as it came closer and closer.

"Oh, Arnold!" she breathed, in her ecstasy at this capitulation. The whispered words formed the last barrier between their lips and a moment later there was none.

The stillness between them was unbroken. Her whole being was sunk in the taste of her triumph. He was like one who, after an endless and sickening fall, finds himself unexpectedly and drowsily safe on a thick bed of soft, delicious flowers.

Then suddenly she moved her hand and a ring she was wearing caught a slight projection on the metal arm of the seat. She jerked it a little to free it. Then she gave a slight cry as something struck the metal with a little tingling sound, and bounded off onto the grass.

He sat up with a start. Then, as the mists cleared from his brain, he said, "You dropped something, didn't you?"

In a moment he was on his knees, groping.

"No, no!" she cried, with a sort of terror, "don't bother, it wasn't anything at all."

But he had already found it. Even as he got up she felt the change in him. He stood looking down at her with the shining thing in his palm.

"It's—it's your wedding ring," he said in a sort of choked whisper. He was trembling.

In her dreadful apprehension she could not say anything. She was busy wrestling with the fury that the small, untoward incident had roused in her, the one incident calculated to awaken him from the dream into which she had found it so difficult to lull him. She stared up at him through the dimness.

"He gave it to you. And now I'm holding it here."

"But what—" she began to stammer.

He did not seem to hear her. He was communing not with her, but with a terrifying monster which had risen from within him to haunt and dog his footsteps.

"I took his money, and now I've tried to take his wife." His tone was almost gentle in its utter abasement and misery.

She couldn't stand it. She sprang up to confront him.

"Arnold, for Heaven's sake, don't talk that way! You frighten me!"

He was really unaware of her, so absorbed was he in the supreme selfishness of realizing his downfall.

"Just a plain sneak-thief! A thief who pretends to be a friend so as to get in!"

"Arnold, what are you going to do? You're not going to tell him?"

She almost screamed the last words at him. Her poise was all gone. She was just a frightened woman alone at night with a man she could no longer sway.

Now for the first time he looked at her. Her last shred of hope vanished at this look. Even in the darkness she could feel the detachment of it. She could almost feel herself growing smaller. He gazed at her as he might had he caught her in some astounding meanness, stealing a neighbor's milk, for example. He seemed to see all around her.

Very simply he gave her back her ring. There was no passion in his voice now.

"Your husband thinks you're a good wife," he said, "and I suppose he'll always think so. That's the kind of man he is. He even thought, probably, that he'd earned my friendship."

He hesitated a moment as she continued to stand motionless before him, mechanically holding her hand outstretched with the ring on it.

"And now," he resumed, and there was finality in his voice and a dawning resolution, "now I'm going to be a real friend to him, but it won't be in New York. There must be some place somewhere where a man can learn to be decent and clean again."

He left her standing there and walked quickly away down the path, a man robbed of his illusions.

One thing was very clear to Emmy as she still stood there, trying to draw together the tattered shreds of her self-confidence. She knew now that even in his moment of greatest surrender he had loved her only with the shell of himself, that never had she really succeeded in planting the gaff in a vital spot.

Suddenly she burst into sobs.

"He never thought of me at all," she said half aloud amidst her tears, "it was himself, only himself he was so upset about. He might at least have said he was sorry."

A little later she was sobbing hysterically: "And he had such beautiful hair!"

When Arthur McWade returned home that night with a sleeping baby on his arm, he found his wife also asleep. Her soft, flushed face was turned up from the pillow, and tear-marks were plain about the corners of her eyes.

"Poor little girl," he said gently, "it hurt her so she cried herself to sleep."

Some days later, Emmy, starting for a walk at the handlebar of her baby's little carriage, noticed a small and absorbed group in front of the house. It consisted of several of the older ladies who lived in the apartment and who gave the house its tone. For it was a very quiet, orderly and respectable sort of house.

"It's an outrage!" one of them was saying heatedly, "a perfect disgrace! And to happen in a house like ours, too!"

"If the landlord hadn't told me positively that they were being packed out right away, you may be sure I wouldn't stay here another day. Isn't it perfectly awful, Mrs. McWade?"

The matron who appealed to Emmy was one who had often given her helpful suggestions in the early stages of her struggle with cooking.

"To think that any woman would conduct herself in such a way," chimed in another, without giving Emmy a chance to reply. "Honestly, I said to my husband that I almost wished these were the days when creatures like that were tarred and feathered!"

And then Emmy realized that they were discussing an unprecedented episode in that apartment of well-conducted families, in connection with which there had been some rather crude occurrences, such as the unexpected return of a husband and the subsequent rushing downstairs of a pale young man without a hat.

"Horrible, nothing less," said Emmy's friend again. "They can't get her out too soon to suit me."

Emmy felt a warm, comfortable glow pervade her being. This was the atmosphere of respectability, and she was of it. It was pleasant to stand on the right side of the fence, and to look over safely at the cowering wretch on the other side, helpless before the missiles that were being thrown at her.

"It's perfectly disgusting!" said Emmy, eagerly throwing her stone.

A COMRADE IN THE DARK

By Lyndon Forrest

"**C**YNTHIA Embrey is my name. I wrote you about—about wanting to get married."

Thus the first customer of the day falteringly introduced herself to the stylish, marvelously corseted, amply proportioned lady who presided over the E.M.B. (Elite Matrimonial Bureau), and who elected to call herself Mrs. Barrington Blythe.

"Ah, yes—Miss Embrey!" repeated Mrs. Blythe, with a smile in which there was neither warmth nor cordiality. "I have your letters distinctly in mind," she

lied as she ran her pudgy beringed fingers through a file of letters and found what she had entirely forgotten in the rush of livelier communications. The matrimonial business had suffered no depression through the war pressure; in fact, the little love god began the year with increased activities.

"Sit down, Miss Embrey," Mrs. Blythe invited, after glancing through one of the customer's stilted, painfully abashed letters, "and let us talk things over cosily."

Miss Embrey seated herself on the edge of the nearest chair. Her manner

bespoke extreme nervousness and self-accusation, as if she were forcing herself to do something her conscience sternly disapproved of, which was, indeed, the case. An overmastering loneliness and dread of solitary old age had finally driven her to a matrimonial agency very much against her inbred principles.

She was in the late thirties, but she was really a girl grown elderly instead of a well-preserved, middle-aged woman. She had fine, appealing brown eyes, a sensitive, expressive mouth, a wholesome country complexion, and a slim figure which was modishly outfitted because she fearfully expected to meet her fate during that first call at the Bureau, of whose workings she knew nothing at all.

Mrs. Blythe gave her customer a smiling nod of encouragement. "Well?"

"Do many folks get married this way—I mean real respectable women?" Miss Embrey asked after a difficult moment.

"Thousands. And our patrons are far above the average in refinement and social prominence," Mrs. Blythe emphasized proudly. "You would probably know many of them by reputation at least if I should name them to you, but of course we *never* disclose names, as every detail of our business is guarded with the strictest privacy."

Miss Embrey drew in a deep breath that seemed to somewhat relieve her pent-up embarrassment, and fell into an easier posture. "I have felt terribly ashamed ever since I wrote you the first letter," she confessed with frank humility. "Even as short a time ago as last year I couldn't have done it at all, and I don't see yet how I forced myself to come here even after you made the appointment for me. The neighbors at home would be terribly scandalized if they knew I so much as thought of getting married this way."

"My dear Miss Embrey, your idea of our business is entirely preposterous!" exclaimed Mrs. Blythe, with well-assumed reproach. "Let me assure you, to begin with, that it is highly honorable in every detail. Excuse me till I close that window—the breeze scatters things so."

At that instant Fate sent Mr. Robinson

Flint to the closed, discreetly glazed door of the E.M.B. (Elite Matrimonial Bureau) in search of a Real Estate office which was in another part of the building. The E.M.B. suite was oddly situated at the end of a curved corridor which formed a sort of a cubby where a person could linger unseen so long as no one opened the door, and where Mr. Flint paused and consulted his address book to make sure he was in the right place, and at that fateful moment an arresting sentence gripped his practical attention.

"Marrying is the most important business of life with most people," stated Mrs. Blythe in a voice that the accidental listener instantly disliked, "and it deserves expert business management even more than the greatest of financial ventures. Matrimonial selection should be an exact science, but it is almost universally left to chance except by people sensible enough to patronize an expert matrimonial bureau, like ours. Thousands—I may say millions—of men and women never meet their soul mates by accident, consequently they go through life single, deprived of all the joys of a happy marriage.

"We have studied our business thoroughly, and have simmered it down to a science. We bring congenial people together under pleasant, proper and tactful conditions. For instance, take your case: you wish to get married but have no means of becoming acquainted with eligible men, so you give the matter into our expert charge. We first make a special study of your temperamental needs, then introduce you to several agreeable, reputable men who also wish to be married, and you are certain to find your ideal and make a happy and suitable marriage."

"A matrimonial agency!" exclaimed Robinson Flint, with an inward grunt of disgust. Then he looked up at the non-committal "E.M.B." sign on the door with a faint stirring of interest. Not that he was personally interested in matrimony; on the contrary, he was a confirmed bachelor well along in years and quite sufficiently warned by luckless marital examples among his friends to

keep out of the danger zone. But the business of making marriages to order appealed to his curiosity by its very preposterousness.

"Of course you have a special ideal in mind, Miss Embrey, and we shall try to introduce you to just that type of man," Mrs. Blythe promised. "Dark, blond, tall or stout, serious or jovial—we have patrons of all kinds."

"I am not so particular about looks as I am about goodness," said Miss Embrey in her clear, but slightly timorous voice. "And I don't care about means, as I don't have to marry for a home. My aunt unexpectedly left me her property and some money besides. But I'd rather not let that be known till the man has asked me."

"The poor boob!" exclaimed Flint under his breath. "Lord, what fools women are. And they want to vote!"

"A large property, did you say, Miss Embrey?" inquired Mrs. Blythe casually.

"Large to me, anyway. It amounts to fifteen thousand dollars in all."

"Quite a nice little nest egg."

"I am willing to marry a poor man. I'd rather, really," affirmed Miss Embrey seriously, "for then I could help him get on in the world. So long as he is honest and kind and refined I'll not ask for anything else. It would be a nice surprise for a man after he married to find his wife had a little fortune for him to invest or start business with, wouldn't it?"

"Yes, most poor men would appreciate that kind of surprise. Well, then, I can introduce you to two very agreeable, nice men—"

"I feel as if I am about to do something shameful!" broke in Miss Embrey with a gust of embarrassed misery. "When I was a young girl I expected to marry, like most other girls, and I surely wanted to because I loved everything about home-keeping and looking after children, but for some reasons no real beaux came along. My sister, five years older than I, also wished to marry, though she never said so because we were brought up not to talk openly about such things, and she was disappointed, too. She died of pneumonia ten years ago, and after that I began to feel the

dreadful loneliness of confirmed spinsterhood, for I knew I was past the age of beaunting, and I longed more than ever for what I'd never have. My married friends invited me to their homes out of pity mostly, I guess, but seeing them happy and satisfied with their husbands and children made me feel lonelier than ever, so I stopped visiting them.

"I had the little home cottage, though it was hardly fit to live in without the costly repairs it needed, and I made my living sewing for the neighbors so I was never in real want. But every year the loneliness grew harder to bear till I became so unhappy and afraid of the solitary old age that hung over me I was kind of dully miserable inside all the time. One day, a couple of weeks ago, I saw an advertisement of your matrimonial paper, and for curiosity's sake I sent the dime you asked for, and when the paper came I read it through from beginning to end, with my doors locked for fear the neighbors might run in and surprise me with it. The letters from folks that you married off happily made such a deep impression on me that I finally forced back my modesty and wrote to you. But I am still ashamed of wanting to get married this way."

Mr. Flint had listened very attentively to Miss Embrey's pathetic little confession. He was surprised at his unaccountable interest in the fool of a marriage candidate who was about to sign away her bit of a fortune in the hazard presented by a matrimonial machine, and still more amazed at the preposterous whim that took possession of him in her behalf. He felt convinced that she was a gentle, modest, simple old maid whose aching loneliness had driven her into the jaws of the sharks who fattened on the credulity of just such desperately forlorn creatures as she, and who would do worse than rob her of her money by forcing upon her a sordid experience which would humiliate and crush her for life.

"I'll hang around the main hall till she comes out, and if she is what I think from her voice and what she said I'll be her comrade in the dark, and save that roll for her," he decided in a matter-of-

fact way. Crusty, unsentimental bachelor that he was, he still possessed the generous sympathy of wholesome, efficient strength for the weak, defenseless creatures that the vampires of the world prey upon.

He had not very long to wait, for Mrs. Blythe dispatched the necessary business of the Bureau with promptness, and dismissed her patron with an appointment that caused the latter to tremble with nervous apprehensions. As she entered the main hall, looking neither right nor left, she gave Flint quite a shock of surprise, for her appearance was so entirely different from his expectations that his half-contemptuous pity turned to chivalrous concern. Certainly he would see that those sharks didn't get their fangs into that gently bred, unsophisticated little backwoods spinster.

It was the city's lunch hour and the streets teemed with office workers of all kinds hurrying to the various eating places along lower Broadway and its side arteries, when Flint followed the nattily gowned, slim figure of the lady he intended to befriend in secret. With the hope of making her acquaintance at once in some dignified manner that would neither alarm nor embarrass her, he kept watching for a chance to perform some trifling service as he elbowed along with the crowd, with one eye on the lady in the navy-blue fur-trimmed suit. When his opportunity finally came, at a congested crossing where the lady narrowly escaped being run down by a truck team, he stepped to her side with a courteous offer of assistance and found to his utter astonishment that he had been following the wrong woman. The fact was that Miss Embrey's ready-made suit was one of a special bargain-sale lot that had about two hundred counterparts drifting about the city.

Robinson Flint was the bull-doggy kind of person that holds onto a resolution till he pulls it through somehow. He had to drive himself mighty hard to keep that self-assigned vow in Miss Embrey's behalf, however, for, as he had no information as to the lady's whereabouts there was nothing for it but to do business with the obnoxious Matrimonial

Bureau. Accordingly he called up a business friend and asked him to stand good for the reputation of Mr. Amos Brown, of Mamaroneck, should he receive inquiries about such a person, and the friend, who knew Flint to be the soul of honesty, readily gave the required promise without question. On the following morning Flint called on Mrs. Blythe, introduced himself as Amos Brown and stated that he wished to marry a middle-aged spinster with a bank account, as he was financially embarrassed at the moment and wanted to mend his fortune through a suitable marriage. In stating his personal tastes he described Miss Embrey so faithfully that Mrs. Blythe at once settled upon her for the victim.

Mrs. Blythe drove a hard business bargain with Flint, who at first held out for a twenty-thousand-dollar bank account, but finally consented to marry for fifteen thousand out of which the Bureau insisted upon taking a two-thousand-dollar fee. He made a stiff protest, for appearance's sake, but before he left the office he signed an agreement to pay the stipulated sum to Mrs. Blythe on his wedding day, backed with credentials which his obliging friend was called upon to verify, for Mrs. Blythe was as shrewd and methodical in business matters as Flint was.

Flint was introduced to Miss Embrey on the next afternoon, in the private office of the Bureau. He made an engagement to call on her that evening at her boarding-place, where he appeared precisely at the appointed moment, in a most unsentimental frame of mind, and about as unromantic a figure as could well be imagined. He was not a homely man but neither was he at all handsome, and he had never, since the days of his first youth, taken any pains to emphasize his good points; he dressed for comfort and neatness in any such materials and styles as his tailor suggested, and wore magenta neckties quite as often as he happened to select the becoming blues that toned down his middle-aged ruddiness and suited the color of his good, frank eyes. He surely was not a vain man.

He tried to ignore Miss Embrey's uncontrollable perturbation while he painstakingly conversed with her on impersonal topics that he hoped to lead around to the matter that had brought him there, but her embarrassment increased so that he did not have the heart to bring up the all-important subject at all. Instead he invited her to take a Sunday walk with him in order to point out some places of general interest, assuring himself that there was no very great need of haste now that he practically had things in his hands, for the Bureau would have no power over Miss Embrey's destiny until she rejected his suit and applied for further introductions, and he would see that that didn't happen.

Naturally, he did not enjoy that call, but as he didn't expect to get any personal pleasure out of the affair he wasn't disappointed. The Sunday walk was not much livelier than that first call, only that he warmed up to the splendors of his native city to such a degree that Miss Embrey forgot herself for a time in her appreciation of his eloquence, for he was a good talker on solid topics. He spent half an hour with her in the boarding-house parlor when he had escorted her home, and departed with his business up his sleeve.

"Let her get over her frustration, poor, timid soul," he charged himself in response to a certain impatience that nagged at his inner self for his indulgence of a feminine whim. "How in time she ever drove herself into a matrimonial game like this I can't imagine. It must have hurt like fire to do it. Shows how desperately lonely those nice, refined old spinsters are in secret. As soon as she gets a bit better acquainted with me I'll put her wise to the swindling ways of matrimonial agencies in common, so that she'll go back to her peaceful little village forever cured of her foolish credulity in such schemes. It's a shame she wasn't suitably married in her young days, good domestic little soul that she is."

In the seclusion of her drab and ugly bedroom Miss Embrey talked Flint softly over to herself, for she had unconsciously fallen into the habit of commun-

ing with herself through solitary living.

"I feel sure he is a real good man," she said, "and he has nice, considerate ways and feelings, for he didn't say one word that anyone could object to. But I am not half clever enough for him—he's found that out already, which is why he hasn't said a word about marriage. And I'm glad I don't suit him—I am *real* glad, for the more I think of it the surer I grow that I can't carry this thing out. It's against all right womanly feelings to seek out a husband this way, and I can't do it. I must tell him so as soon as he speaks the first word about it. And, oh how thankful I am he doesn't like me, for then he won't be disappointed!"

Before Flint made his third call on Miss Embrey he conceived a sudden inspiration in her behalf that greatly pleased him, for even the little he had seen of her had made him very averse to disappointing her in any way. Not that he felt the slightest degree of personal interest in her, but her ignorance of hard worldly facts in the face of existing circumstances made him feel toward her exactly as he would have felt toward a snared bird. Now he had hit upon a happy solution of her troubles through a match-making plan which would require mighty little effort on his part, as he thought. He had a bachelor friend, an endlessly good fellow born with marrying instincts which inexorable duty had thwarted, for all his young energies and means had been absorbed in the care of his widowed mother and sisters so that he had always been far too busy to fall in love during the usual marrying age. Now that he was unencumbered and well-to-do he considered himself too dull and stodgy to attract women, although he still cherished his romantic ideals and domestic dreams, and he had long ago relinquished the notion of marriage. He didn't want the only kind of woman he could get then—the one willing to marry for physical comforts with a few luxuries thrown in. Dan Marksby was just the man for Miss Embrey and she was the ideal woman for him. Gad, what a fine idea to bring them together!

But Marksby happened to be in Canada just then, on business, so Flint had

to keep his scheme to himself and bluff Miss Embrey along for a matter of three weeks or so, during which time he became pretty well acquainted with her. He was so happy in the anticipation of the good he was to bestow on his friend that Miss Embrey noticed his rise of spirits and grew correspondingly uneasy. Her conscience forced her to break her reserve and speak out plainly.

"Mr. Brown," she began with crimsoning face, "I have been hoping and hoping you would say something about marriage, so that I could tell you I can't carry this thing through. I don't want to get married this way, for the boldness of it has shamed me through and through. Oh, I can't tell you what I've suffered in mind since you began to call on me, but it seemed I couldn't bring myself to speak out first. I know I don't suit you—I am not half clever enough for a well-informed, very progressive man like you and I am so very glad of it for I know you won't be disappointed at my withdrawal. You don't mind at all, do you?" she inquired with such intense concern that Flint hastened to relieve her anxiety by a pell-mell confession of his ruse in her behalf.

"I merely wanted to be your comrade in the dark and save your money for you," he earnestly assured her, "but by losing sight of you the day I followed you out of the office I had to change my plans and act through the Matrimonial Bureau. I am a bachelor by instinct and choice—never had the slightest desire to get married and of course I never shall, for a man doesn't change at my time of life. I'd have explained before this only I wanted you to get a bit acquainted with me first, and then I got an idea that looked mighty good to me. I still want to carry it out in your behalf, Miss Embrey. Fact is, I have a good friend—a really splendid fellow who has always wanted to marry but hadn't the means to do so till late years—whom I want to introduce you to as I think you'll suit each other capitally. And I want you to promise me never to tell him anything about this matrimonial agency business, mind, for although—"

"You are a good, good man, Mr.

Brown," Miss Embrey broke in with a rush of grateful appreciation. "I never can thank you enough for your kindness, and you a rank stranger too."

Flint waved a deprecatory hand. "Most any honest man would do the same," he gruffly declared.

"Oh, no they wouldn't! I don't know much about the world at large, but I do know that few strangers would have taken all that trouble for a lone person like me."

"Forget it," Flint inelegantly advised, for the fervor of her gratitude embarrassed him somewhat.

"And you don't really scorn and despise me for—"

"Fudge! If I'd been a marrying man situated as you are, I'd probably do the same thing myself," Flint lied gallantly. "But there's no use telling Marksby about it, understand, for he's full of old-fashioned sentimentality about women and he wouldn't approve. It might take some of the bloom off things for him."

"Oh, but I gave the Bureau my real name and address and told all about myself."

"No matter. They won't dare make any disclosures. This particular agency may not be as rotten as some, but the very fact that they compelled me to sign an agreement to hand over two thousand dollars of your money on our wedding day, gave me a weapon to hold over their heads in case they try to make trouble for you. Those agency frauds don't usually get out, because both sides are only too anxious to keep still, for no matter how badly stung a patron may be he objects to having his foolishness bawled out in public, so he makes no kick. Don't worry about the matter, for you'll never hear from the Agency again.

"Marksby is coming home on Friday and I'm going to bring him around to see you on Saturday evening," Flint continued in a brisk change of voice. "I'll be much disappointed if you don't take to each other at the very start, for your tastes are so much alike you might almost have been made for each other."

"Oh, Mr. Brown—"

"Flint—Robinson Flint, remember," he corrected for the third or fourth time.

"Don't call me 'Brown' in Marksby's presence or he'll smell a rat."

"Mr. Flint, I wouldn't like to meet a friend of yours—not with the idea of marrying," declared Miss Embrey. "Don't think I'm not grateful for your kind motive, but—but I have made a big mistake, I think. I must not be a marrying woman after all, the way I feel about it now."

"Oh, come, don't lose your nerve like this!" Flint admonished in a comradely fashion. "I understand how it is with you, even though I am not a marrying person. Of course it's a lot worse for a sensitive woman to face a lonely old age than for a husky, hard-as-nails fellow like me, and I really think you should have someone dependable to look out for you the rest of your life. Marksby's the very man for you."

"I'll go back home just as I am," decided Miss Embrey with gentle firmness, "and feel differently because of this experience—thankful for what I escaped through your great kindness to me."

"You'll lose your money yet, if somebody doesn't look after it for you." Flint worried when he found that no argument of his could shake her determination. "At least let me see about investing it safely for you, if you haven't a practical business friend at home. I know a good deal about financial interests, and I'll do as well for you as I would for myself, Miss Embrey."

She did not doubt the assertion. So she stayed in the city until he had invested her money in a prosperous business that careful Dan Marksby thought so well of that he had put all his savings into it; and then he saw her start for home with a feeling of warm satisfaction in having thus secured her little fortune for her future comfort.

Quite unaccountably Flint felt lonely after Miss Embrey's departure. Every time he passed her boarding-place he recalled the pleasant hours he had spent there, and for that reason he fell into the habit of going that way often just to get that comfortable feeling of cosiness that he had hardly realized at the time of its beginning. He actually missed her. How could that be, he wondered.

By and by strange little fancies, such as never before visited his leisure, began to hover over his briarwood pipe as he sat in his neat but uncossy bachelor quarters. He sometimes saw Miss Embrey sitting opposite him just across a warmly lighted table, superintending his comfort, her fine brown eyes alight with domestic peace—his peace and hers—and he'd watch the mental picture hungrily as long as it lasted, then pull himself up with a scornful exclamation. Land deliver him! Was he growing sentimental at his well-seasoned age of forty-seven? He would put a stop to those foolish reveries by thrusting Miss Embrey and her affairs out of his mind for good.

But he did not stop thinking of her altogether, even though he discontinued his walks past her one-time boarding-place. When Dan Marksby telephoned him excitedly, one night, that his business had gone to the wall, completely carrying away every cent of his money, Flint even neglected to express his sympathy in his shocked consternation over Miss Embrey's loss. That he had actually brought disaster upon her appalled him to a degree that sent him hurrying to her little village home in the most dejected mood of his life.

He found her standing among the first delicate flowers of spring in her newly improved garden, straight and slim and pretty in her simple pink house-dress that suited her girlish figure to perfection. Everything about her was fresh and sweet and fragrant, for spring had lately adorned the earth as a bride, and the very air was full of radiance such as Flint had rarely seen in his busy city existence.

She received his gloomy news quietly, with the fine courage that was hers by inheritance as well as practice. Of course it was disappointing, but no one was to blame and she would a thousand times rather have lost her money that way than through the dreadful marriage that she might have made if he had not saved her. Luckily she had saved almost a thousand dollars of her inheritance for putting her house and grounds in good repair, so that she wouldn't have to

spend anything on either for years. She was almost sure she could rent part of the house to a nice, neighborly family, for enough money to cover her simple needs. Oh, she would manage to get along finely.

"You mustn't worry about the loss, my dear friend," she kindly admonished her dejected companion. "You can't help that the business failed, you know."

"No, I can't help it," he echoed. "But the thought that I led you to put your money into an insecure business is gall and wormwood to me, and always will be."

"Oh, you really must not feel that way, Mr. Flint," Miss Embrey begged with an appealing touch on his arm. "I do assure you that—"

"There's another thing I can't help," Flint blurted, slapping his free hand over hers. "I can't help missing you like thunder all the time. That is really what brought me up here to-day. I wouldn't have had the courage to come without that excuse. Miss Embrey, don't you think, after all, you're a marrying woman?"

A flood of color surged into her face and her hand trembled under his. But

like the scrupulously honest soul that she was she answered him truthfully in spite of her embarrassed surprise.

"Yes," she said. "Yes, I think I am, after all."

"Then will you marry me—now, this very day, so that I can take care of you right along from now on?"

"I have missed you so much since you said good-by to me on the train," confessed Miss Embrey for answer, "that when I saw you coming down the street a little while ago I had the happiest moment of my whole life."

Robinson Flint reached an unsteady hand into his pocket and drew out a folded sheet of paper. "I didn't really dare to expect an acceptance," he rather huskily admitted, "but I got this anyway. There's no law against buying a marriage license even if a man has to keep it for a souvenir of his hopes."

They walked to the parson's house at the end of the blossom-starred street and were married. It was an ordinary procedure which is gone through with every second of the day, of every year, somewhere in King Cupid's world-wide domain, but it made Robinson Flint quite extraordinarily happy.

IN A CHRISTIAN LAND

By Lurana Sheldon

THE moonlight showed her face white and fearful, but slowly, inch by inch, her head drooped until it rested upon her companion's shoulder.

The wind sang merrily in the branches of the fir trees that shielded the spot and the music of the waves, as they laved the rock shore, added minor chords that were harmonious.

Yet, after that night, the old, familiar rocks seemed to her distorted fancy to scowl threateningly, and her childhood friends, the hemlocks, shook fingers of warning.

Only in Jack Hobart's presence did the flush of joy mantle her face and the exaltation of bliss dim the anguish of her

vague forebodings. At all other times, anxiety, an unnamable anticipation of evil, sat upon her face like a mask, and her once buoyant step lagged, except when a sudden noise or sharply spoken word startled her into haste.

The island on which she lived was barren of all but trees and rocks, but deep down in its bosom was hidden wealth, and day and night the miners went down into the drifts, bringing to the surface the ore for which a steamer waited every fortnight, and while waiting, united the desolate island to the rest of the civilized world.

Eloise Neil had lived here the entire sixteen years of her life. She was born among the fir trees when the island was

only inhabited by fishermen and their families, and her father was one of the first to get employment in the mine when an enterprising man from the "States" had come there and opened it. Her knowledge was confined to the rocks and trees, the number of days in the month when her father really worked, and the number in which he sulked around their log cabin, ugly from poor rum, and ready to quarrel with anyone who gave him the suspicion of an opportunity.

Her accomplishments were the homely ones of the kitchen, the drying of fish and the knitting of seines. She could shoot, row a boat, and swim like a man, but with it all she was very pretty. Her skin was perfect, her form lithe and graceful.

She knew nothing of books, nothing of the world, but she knew much about God. Her mother had told her that God was a monstrous man who sat somewhere in the heavens, watching her every action with a stealthy eye and licking his ferocious lips in gloating over her every sinful deed—only biding His time to mete out to her a sufficient punishment.

What her mother had *not* taught her the neighbors had. They were a plain-faced lot of women, while Eloise was pretty. They told her that beauty was a curse and brought direful consequences—that is, unless its owner was especially meek, obliging and deferential to others.

It was small wonder that horror gripped her heart after she had yielded to Jack Hobart's temptings, or that, from that night, she tried not to think of God, but had crept into bed shivering and terrified, without daring to kneel in prayer, as had been her custom.

Only when Jack held her to his heart, as he did night after night under the fir trees, while her father was working with his gang in the drifts of the mine, was she able to forget her fears and smile into his eyes her joy of his admiration. She fondled his beardless face with her hand and told him breathlessly of her trust and devotion, and he, believing that luck would favor him in the end,

encouraged the homage which she showed upon him.

She had been the one oasis for him in this desolate spot; the one compensation for his exile to uncongenial surroundings. For, being only an accountant who had been sent there to look over the books at the Mining Company's store, he knew that his days were few on the island and that once away from Eloise Neil he would forget her absolutely. It was the way of a man and he justified himself in it with no waste of argument.

But when the hour of parting came it was a little more difficult than he had anticipated. The wild passion of the girl frightened him. She was for a time uncontrollable in her grief, and even the rocks had ears. Her cries beat upon his heart as they did upon the boulders, without response; but he was fearful that they would be heard and hurried with his promises.

"He would come back in time—ample time. And he would certainly marry her!"

She crept back to the cabin at last, sobbing silently, from their last meeting beneath the fir trees.

Afterward she heard that he had gone but a little way—just over to another of the Company's stores on a neighboring island, where there was a small settlement of miners. He could sail across the little Bay to see her often if he wished to, but day after day passed and he did not come. She roamed about on the shore whenever she dared and gazed across the water, always looking for his boat, but as the weeks passed the lines deepened in her pretty face and the hand of dread gripped her heart tighter and tighter.

One day as she sat upon the rocks straining her eyes for the boat that might bring Jack Hobart back to her, Ben Gray, one of the trammers, came shuffling toward her, and before she could understand his first blundering words he was seated beside her.

"Let me help ye, Eloise!" he stammered. "The Dad will hear how it is afore long and then ye'll need a strong man to stand atween ye. I don't care,

because I love ye, Eloise! I've always loved ye, I reckon, so things don't matter to me. Hobart was a scamp, but how was ye to know it when ye hadn't seen none like him? I'll marry ye and be glad to do it, and them as has anything to say can say it to me! I'll be ready enough with the answer. There won't no one have no doubts of ye when I'm done with 'em, I'll warrant!"

He clenched his big fists as he spoke and looked ready to do battle. Eloise gasped as she looked into his face and heard his words, and for just a moment her soul was awed. Jack Hobart's smiling face with its girlish mouth seemed to come between them, and the black, stern ruggedness of Ben's features grew hateful to her.

"No! No!" she managed to say. "He will come back, Ben! He promised to marry me!"

Ben's last doubt vanished and he dug his nails into his palms as he growled his answer.

"He won't come back, leastwise not of his own accord! He's goin' back to New York on the very next steamer, and afore that time——"

Eloise sprang to her feet crying shrilly, "He must come back! I'll die if he don't come back!" and without a backward glance at Ben she fled towards her father's cabin. As the door closed behind her Ben Gray rose to his feet, muttering vengeance.

At noon the next day Eloise learned that Jack Hobart had been brought back to the island on some pretext or other. She fled to her attic room and looked out of the window. He was out there, just in front of the cabin, and Ben Gray, his hip pocket bulging suspiciously, was talking to him.

Delight at seeing him again made the blood leap in her veins, but a terror was upon her—she watched Ben furtively.

Would Jack never look up? If he would! she might warn him. She tried tapping upon the glass, but her fingers seemed benumbed.

Were they trying to force him to marry her? Had they threatened him? Or were they tricking him with some subterfuge as she knew they had tricked

others? They were a hard lot, these island miners, especially when they were drinking. Ben was not drunk now, but what was that in his pocket?

She prayed then for the first time in months, "O God, make him look up!" but the prayer froze upon her lips as she saw what was transpiring.

Five men, one of them her father, came suddenly in sight, and almost instantly Jack Hobart turned and headed toward the shore, where a massive punt rode at the end of its painter. Their pockets all bulged in the same suspicious manner, but she guessed by Jack's movements that he was not aware of what they wanted of him—they had doubtless asked him to accompany them on some prospecting venture—it was an old trick up there; she shook like a leaf as she thought of it.

She stood at the window until they had entered the boat and rowed away, her lover's form being obscured from her sight by the bulkier one of the trummer, then she slid softly to the floor and lay there—unconscious.

When the moonlight came again the boat had returned with one man missing, and that man Jack Hobart. Eloise, weak and frightened, strained her ears to hear the conversation that took place in the kitchen below her. She heard enough to verify her worst fears, then, crouching in a corner, waited for sleep to visit the others.

Late that night she crept stealthily from the cabin in her night clothes, closing the door softly behind her so as not to wake her mother.

Only the moon saw the white-robed figure as it made its way along the shore to where the big gray punt still tugged at its mooring. She loosed the painter from the rock where it was tied, stepped in and knelt upon the bottom, her face turned in the direction where she had last seen her lover.

Around her the waves played lightly; but slowly, steadily, the old boat drifted toward the open sea, and over the sound of the water breaking upon the rocky coast the music of her childhood friends, the hemlocks, came, unheeded, to her ears.

THE TEN O'CLOCK BRIDE

By Helen Dean Fish

LARRY HART and his best man, Timothy, left their apartment on West Eightieth street and walked across the Park without exchanging a single word. At the Avenue the bridegroom hailed a taxicab and they sped downtown. Once only, as they waited to cross Thirty-fourth street, the sagacious Timothy ventured to speak.

"There's your brother, Larry, see him? Crossing the street?" he chuckled. "Won't he stare when he hears about you to-night!"

The bridegroom continued gazing straight ahead and his best man looked out the window to hide a smile.

It was Thanksgiving morning at quarter to twelve, one of the mild, sunless days of early winter. The Sunday effect of closed shops and comparatively empty streets was relieved by the holiday air of the crowd, growing as the hours for dining drew nearer.

Timothy seemed to derive pleasure from the sights, for his smile lasted until, having left the Avenue, they stopped before a modest brown house set behind a deep garden. When they stood at the door the best man suddenly realized that the first of his duties must be to ring the bell, since Larry made no move toward it.

They were admitted by an old manservant, who explained apologetically that the rector was engaged in his study with a couple of young ladies. He led them across the wide dim hall to a cosy music room.

"Just a very few moments, sir," he almost whispered to Timothy.

"All right, Collins, no hurry at all," said the best man, cheerfully.

Collins withdrew, and the bridegroom, sinking into the nearest chair, mopped his forehead nervously.

"See here, old man, it's not so bad, you know," Timothy began.

"I told you not to talk, Timmy!" snapped the bridegroom.

"Well, but you know, old man, er—I'm willing to respect your—natural feeling of—of solemnity and all that, but you can't look like this when she comes! It'll soon be over and you're getting off easy, you know. What if she'd dragged you to the church and had a big affair? Cheer up! Honestly, I never expected to see you funk at anything this way, Larry!"

Larry raised a drawn, wild-eyed face for an instant.

"I wouldn't have gone to the church," he said.

"Oh, yes, you would, if she hadn't happened to want this kind. You've got an awfully nice, sensible girl, Larry."

"What time is it?"

"Five of."

"There's a clock striking now."

"I'm five of. Beside, what difference does it make?"

"She's not here."

"Lord, is *that* what's making you so jumpy? Why, they're *always* late. You've been in enough weddings yourself to know that. Did you think she'd come at ten o'clock and wait around for the magic hour!"

"Oh, I don't care! She can be as late as she likes! Isabel hates to waste time. Or something more important may have come up. I shouldn't be surprised if she had an idea for that new picture of hers and thought she could paint till eleven and still have time to dress and come around."

"The old man's busy, anyhow," said Timothy.

"Did Collins say who was in there with him?"

"Two young ladies."

"Suppose one of them is Isabel."

"Oh, I guess not. Collins knew what we'd come for."

"It would be just like her to want a last talk with the old man. She's awfully fond of him, you know, and he's been just like a father to her ever since she lost her own people."

"But there's two of 'em," said Timothy. "Probably charity callers or something like that. You know how he is—they all come to him."

Larry mopped his forehead again, felt the edge of his collar and gave a smothered groan.

"Why didn't we get something to drink before we came in! Do you suppose we'd have time?"

"Oh, come, Larry, don't propose bolting!" Timothy laughed very cheerfully. "I heard once of a fellow who was to have been married here and who never turned up at the wedding at all. You wouldn't exactly care to cut his figure, would you?"

Larry started nervously. "That happened here?"

"Yes, sometime last winter."

"Did they catch him?" Larry asked in a strange voice.

"I believe he got away with it altogether. No one knew who he was and the girl wouldn't tell. The affair wasn't made public, anyhow."

"And *she* came—to the wedding?"

"Here on the dot, I guess, but no bridegroom. I don't know who she was or any of the details of the case."

Larry's voice was positively hoarse when he spoke again. "He was a damned cad, wasn't he?" he said.

"Of course," responded Timothy, still cheerfully, but looking down at his friend with growing uneasiness.

Larry sat on the extreme edge of his chair, a picture of misery, his elbows on his knees and his head in his palms. The best man's face became really serious.

"See here, Larry, aren't you all right? I wish to God I knew some way to cheer you up!" Then a thought struck him and he mussed up his hair thoroughly before he could give it utterance.

"Say, Larry, you're not thinking about—about that—that little—Bird girl, are you?"

A sound, half groan and half an ex-

clamation of assent, escaped the bridegroom. Timothy looked about helplessly as if the portraits on the walls might tell him what to do. Then he spoke in hitches.

"I'm awfully sorry, old man. I didn't know it was as bad as that—you know I was West last winter and you only wrote once about her. I supposed it was all over."

"It is all over!" snapped Larry. "I haven't seen her since a year ago to-day, last Thanksgiving morning, at the door of her apartment. She stood there smiling at me—and then she went in——"

His head sank lower in his hands and before Timothy could speak the curtain was drawn aside and a silver-haired old man in clericals stood smiling in at them. His smile changed quickly to a look of gentle solicitude when he saw Larry's abject figure.

Timothy stepped forward, his brow clearing. "Good morning, sir!"

Larry got to his feet.

The old man spoke in a gentle and very cordial tone, with a smile which illumined his face.

"Good morning to you, sir! Good morning, Larry! I am very glad indeed to see you. An occasion of this sort gives me something more to be thankful for to-day."

"Is she here?" asked Larry.

The rector hesitated half a second. "Yes," he said, "she's been here since ten o'clock. We've been having a little talk—about the wedding." Then, as if Larry had not spoken, he went on, "You know, marrying happy young people is one of the happiest parts of my work, and then there's always the fun of keeping track of them afterward, I love that, too. I've a good many hundreds now," he smiled reminiscently, "but I'm especially glad to have a wedding to-day because *last* Thanksgiving I had a disappointment. I was to have married two young people, but the groom—didn't appear. It was very sad for the poor little girl," he finished simply, and looked full at Larry. Larry's face was stricken and his eyes full of a sort of horror. Timothy gave him a bewildered, unbelieving stare and at the hint of a smile from the rector

slipped out of the room, across the hall and out to the fresh air, where he walked up and down in a vain effort to stop the whirl in his brain which had begun when he looked at Larry.

In the little parlor Larry and the old man faced each other. "Isabel told me about it," he continued in a cheerful, matter-of-fact tone.

"Isabel!" Larry's lips uttered.

"She had the story from little Miss Bird herself. Of course, you understand Miss Bird didn't—*tell*, but—Isabel is clever at guessing things. Sit down, Larry, there by the window."

Larry moved across the room and seated himself opposite the priest, who had known him since boyhood.

"It seems that Isabel needed a model for her new picture, and Miss Bird came to her. She was surprised that a young gentlewoman should be seeking that employment, but this little Miss Bird had to support herself and lately she had had so much difficulty in getting work that she decided to answer Isabel's advertisement.

"Isabel found she could use her and they became friends from the first—it was only last week. Yesterday evening Miss Bird happened to tell Isabel a part of her story and Isabel guessed the rest. They came to me this morning. We've been talking it over, and now, Larry boy, the only thing we want to know is why you didn't come here *last* Thanksgiving morning. A good deal depends on that."

Larry's face was hidden.

"I wasn't in condition. I was drunk."

One couldn't have told from the gentle old man's face that it wasn't the most natural thing in the world for a young man to explain that he had failed to appear at his wedding because he was drunk.

"Well?" he said.

"I knew it would make no end of unhappiness for her if she married me, so I sent her word that last morning that I gave her up—and then I got drunk."

It sounded crude and vulgar as he told it.

"But she loved you," said the old man simply, "and you loved her?"

"Good God, yes!" burst out Larry in an agony.

"Then why?"

"I had no money—of my own. She had none, of course, and my people didn't take to her—father especially. Well, life isn't a story book and I knew I had nothing fit to offer her, so after I'd fought it out all night I went to tell her we'd—better not. That was Thanksgiving morning. She seemed different and I felt she must be beginning to think she was making a mistake, but I couldn't get words to tell her—there. So I went away and wrote a note, telling her not to come here and why. I sent it back to her. You see no one knew about the wedding—not even you. She had no one to see her married and my people were not to know. I've got the license yet—I found it in this coat this morning." He placed his hand over his breast pocket. "She didn't even have a new dress to wear, just an old one that I liked, green it was—sort of velvety stuff." He gave a man's deep sigh but he looked very boyish. "Well, then I got drunk—really drunk for the only time in my life. And she didn't get the note!" The look of horror came into his face again. "It must have been terrible for her! I never knew she came here. I never heard from her again."

The rector sighed. "Did you ever feel that you wanted to see her again?"

"Oh, good God!" ejaculated Larry.

"But before your father died in the spring you were engaged to Isabel?"

"Yes."

"And then, of course, you *couldn't* go back to find Miss Bird."

"I had cut myself off from her forever! I had made myself think I'd forgotten her. And this morning—I knew I hadn't!"

"Excuse me just a moment," said the old man and rising he left the room.

Larry, alone, ground his teeth, writhed and then sat motionless again.

At last there was a sound as the curtain was pushed back and some one entered. Larry did not raise his head and the girl stood looking down at him. Her hair had golden lights and looked springy and soft about her face. Her eyes were

blue and so clear that the sweetness of her soul shone through radiantly. Her hands and petite figure were perfect and she wore a soft green velvet frock which looked as if it had come from Paris but which in reality she had made herself.

"Larry," she said softly.

He got up as if dazed. "I sent the note, Rose; you believe I sent the note?"

"He just told me. It makes all the difference," she said.

"No!" he said almost roughly. "Nothing can make any difference! You didn't get it and you've suffered! I was a despicable cad!"

Her eyes widened. "Don't say that, Larry. I *know* you too well. I understand just how it happened—every bit of it. I trust you and so does Isabel—and the rector." Then she added irrelevantly, "Isabel wants me to tell you that she doesn't love you any more. She's willing to have you for a friend and you're to come to the studio for tea as often as you like—but she couldn't think of marrying you. She told me to tell you."

"Where is she?"

"She just went out to stop your friend from walking up and down so—noticeably in front of the house. I think she said she'd bring him in."

Larry raised his head again and looked at her long and completely.

"What have you been doing?" he asked.

She smiled faintly. "Oh, earning an honest living any way I could. Last week I found myself in rather a corner, so I answered an advertisement of Isabel's. He's just been telling you the

rest. He said that you—that you——"

"That I still love you," finished Larry.

"No, but that he'd—if we wanted him to—if *you* wanted him to——"

"That he'd——"

"Well, Isabel said right away that she'd be glad—she's been so good to me, Larry. She's wonderful! At first, I thought she was cold and awfully matter of fact, but she's not a bit. She's so sensible and always knows right away what's the best thing to do."

Larry stared out the window.

"If I thought you could possibly forgive me or that you'd think of such a thing, I'd ask you to marry me this morning, Rose."

She had to squeeze in between a bronze statuette on a pedestal and his unyielding shoulder to reach him. Then after looking down at her almost incredulously for a second he took her in his arms.

Three minutes later the old rector stood outside the curtains. "Are you ready?" he asked. "It's after twelve."

"Yes, we're ready!" answered Larry in a new voice.

Isabel said "That's good" in her most matter-of-fact tone and came in and patted Larry on the sleeve as she kissed Rose. The old rector followed her with his prayer-book and his most charming smile. Timothy came last, looking half scared, half sheepish and half amused.

The rector led the bride to the bow window overlooking the garden, and the others followed. A gleam of sunshine fell on Rose's hair and across Larry's face as he stood beside her. Then Isabel and the best man took their places and the rector's gentle voice began, "Dearly beloved——"



THE RE-BAKING

By Abigail Marshall

MR. WILLIS SEYMOUR tossed aside the morning paper, stretched his arms above his head and yawned. The little clock on the mantel ticked imperintently. He frowned at it. It ticked on with merry unconcern. That clock belonged to Mrs. Seymour. It had no business in his den. No more had he, for that matter, nor anywhere else—now.

For years he had been the spoilt child of Business, and was tucked into bed lately by its golden hands—retired, the world termed it, and envied him. But it is one thing to retire, and another to sleep. Mr. Seymour was not old enough to sleep. He was more wide awake than he had been for years, he told himself; awake to many facts, one of which was that he and his wife, Evelyn, had ceased to love each other.

Again he glared at the clock. Half-past ten, it said.

It was a pretty thing, dressed in slabs of mother-of-pearl cemented by gold and shaped like a miniature church, with gates of gold spikes, each topped with a tiny pearl knob. It reminded him of Evelyn, all dressed up with a pretty white face, that day, ten years ago, when they had promised to love, honor, and all that nonsense in the church. No, he was wrong. They had not been married in a church. Theirs was a civil marriage. Was it not a runaway match—a love match? He had read a lot of silly love stories since then. No wonder he had forgotten his own.

Ten years! Every minute of those years had been ticked off one by one by some such white-faced piece of machinery as that pearl-clad one on the mantel, and he had not noticed them go. He had had his business. But without that? He was forty-five. Mrs. Seymour was thirty-eight. The probability

of twice another ten years of marriage faced them both. Twenty years meant millions of seconds, ticked away by that little clock.

"Confound it," he said aloud.

He reached across the table at his elbow, upset the silver cream pitcher, swore and rang the bell savagely.

A man with a handbox appearance stepped noiselessly into the room. Mr. Seymour rang twice, furiously, before he turned and saw the servant.

"Yes, sir?" It was the third time the man had said it, but his voice was as soft as his boots and lived in the same direction.

"Take away this," indicating the breakfast tray, "and Benson——"

The man turned like an automaton.

"What's this infernal clock doing here?"

"Doing, sir?"

"Yes, doing. I know it's doing its business, ticking as loud as a sledge-hammer, but who left it here—who brought it to my den?"

"Mrs. Seymour, sir. She wanted you to have it fixed. Said she was going to ask you. It wouldn't go, she said."

"It's going now," said Mr. Seymour grimly.

"Yes, sir, so it seems."

"I mean it's going out of here. Take it away."

The man rested the tray on a carved trestle beside the door, returned for the offending clock, and placed it carefully in his pocket.

Its muffled ticks could be heard protesting until the door closed and Mr. Seymour was alone. He was not content, however. It was not the clock, but what it represented, that irritated him.

Time!

The word rang in his ears like the doom of a man sentenced to the Tombs. He paced the room, kicking at the soft

rug, the gilt andirons, the carved leg of an unoffending mahogany chair, all of which were so many periods that closed the sentence of his business life. These were some of the things he had worked to possess, and now he had them. There was no need for him to do more than sleep, now, while his money worked.

How he had looked forward to this time, when he and Evelyn should have nothing to do but travel and enjoy themselves! And now? Good Heavens! He dreaded the thought of leaving New York in her company alone, his wife, the woman he was no longer in love with. What would he do without the refuge of his club? He wondered what Evelyn would do without—without what?

He had not thought of her. She had no club. She had her sister's house to go to—a house full of children and a couple who paraded kisses till he felt as nauseated as in a candy-kitchen. Mr. and Mrs. Bowers had been married for seventeen years and boasted that they never had a cross word—that threadbare lie which never deceived anybody.

Though he and Evelyn could boast almost as much. They did not wrangle, not of late, had not crossed fiery swords of temper for five years at least. He smiled as he recalled their first five years, slashed with her tantrums and his outbursts of rage, and the delicious calms that followed, moments of blissful reunion that Evelyn called their fresh wedding-days, a joy those never-had-angry-word people could never experience.

No, there was nothing wrong with Mr. and Mrs. Seymour, except their marriage. Their marriage, like many another, was a cake that had grown stale. He did not love Evelyn now. Evelyn did not love him. Neither of them loved anyone else. They had discussed the situation calmly, without anger, without reproaches.

Divorce was dismissed as unnecessary. When one or the other wanted to marry again, there would be time enough to talk of divorce. Separation? They considered that also, but agreed they preferred not to provide their friends with gossip. Evelyn shrank from the pity that is always bestowed upon an unloved

wife, no matter how cold her own love has grown. So they decided to live on under separate portions of the same roof, as rich folk could afford to do, and be luxuriously unhappy.

This was the conclusion they had arrived at three months ago, and Mr. Seymour had yawned, kicked the rug, the andirons, the carved leg of the unoffending chair, and sworn every morning since. He was irritated with himself, with Evelyn, with everybody, and everything. He did not regret refusing to go to Asbury Park for the summer. New York was good enough for him. He hated crowds. She offered to take a bungalow, even to cook for him. He refused, outwardly courteous, inwardly shrieking at the idea of being alone with her in a cottage. One needs to be in love for such a life.

She did not care to go alone, she said, did not want to take one of her nieces for company, in fact, upon thinking it over, she decided New York was good enough for her, too. The Hudson and the Palisades were as pretty a view as the ocean, and her rooms captured every breeze that ventured out in the July and August days. No, he had nothing to reproach himself for, and she had nothing to complain of.

His thoughts again reverted to that confidential conference three months before. Evelyn had been ready enough to give him his freedom if he cared for someone else. He was not in love, he assured her, and then grew hotly resentful because she believed him.

"No," she said, "I guess neither of us is likely to have a consuming passion, we are too old for that."

He was not too old, of that he was certain; but he would not hurt her feelings by hinting that perhaps she was. He had gone out with the boys on three occasions since to prove his immunity against age. What failures those nights had been! Not one girl could he bring himself to as much as kiss.

Faugh! What girls! Brainless, painted dolls with their market value ticketed on their flat, empty chests. It was not a sign of age that such as they could not make his pulse beat faster, but a sign of

intellect. His heart was no burnt-out volcano, of that he felt confident. Five years of passionate love could not consume all the fires of which he was capable. Let him but meet the right woman, and how soon Evelyn would see the flames burst forth again. He could feel them smoulder even now, at the bare thought of it.

Thinking of flames brought him again to the fireplace. He turned out the asbestos fire and looked at his watch. He had spent an hour thinking. Silly occupation.

The weather reports had predicted a hot spell, consequently a cold rain was falling. The weather and women, how little their performances lived up to their promises!

There was Evelyn. From being a passionate, self-willed, opinionated, high-spirited girl, she had become a calm, retiring, patient middle-aged woman, with a disposition so yielding as to be exasperating, and with whom it was impossible to fight. According to her own accounts, she was always employed in doing "nothing in particular," and content to go on with that exciting occupation.

He walked to the window and stared with disapprobation at the rain. With this encouragement it pattered against the window with more force. Through its blur he saw the figure of a woman on the opposite pavement. Her head was covered by a close cap, her coat and boots were of rubber. She carried no umbrella, and she walked as though she enjoyed the rain beating upon her face.

Her brisk, decided step, her defiance of the storm roused a warm feeling of admiration within Mr. Seymour. Its unexpected glow sent a thrill through him. He was a young man yet. He wished he could tell Evelyn of this sensation, this symptom of returning youth. But as he rejoiced the woman crossed the road and he recognized the uplifted face as his wife's. His first sensation was disappointment, his next curiosity. Where had she been in all the rain? A fresh storm thrashed the pane as though to assure him there was plenty more for him to go out in if he wished.

He shivered and went back to the fireplace and re-lit the asbestos fire. He regretted having sent the little clock away. She might have come in about it and he could have commented on the dampness of her hair and wondered what had taken her out in the storm. As to that he could go to her sitting-room and ask her. No, she would raise her eyebrows—she had nicely curved eyebrows—open her eyes wide—they were very large anyway, and a soft brown—and reply, "Oh, nothing in particular."

No, he would have to find out for himself. Not that it mattered. It was no business of his where she went, he really did not want to know, only——

His musings were interrupted by a knock on the door.

"Come in," he called, and his wife entered.

"I'm sorry to intrude, Willis. Did I interrupt your reading or writing, or——"

She looked round for evidence of his occupation. The table was bare, his hands were empty.

"Sit down," he said, politely, ignoring her question.

"I want to ask you to do me a favor, Willis." Her figure was mature, but her face looked absurdly young in the soft light of the asbestos fire. "I want to know if you will marry me?"

He stared at her in amazement, then laughed aloud.

"I didn't laugh when you asked me to marry you," she said, a pained look in her earnest eyes.

"But—but—the last talk we had we discussed the probability of divorce, and now——"

"This need make no difference to my promise. I will get a divorce from you whenever you wish."

"I can't imagine——"

"It means my happiness, Willis."

"But—but the absurdity—to marry again——"

"It isn't absurd. If you will stop laughing I will explain," she said with gentle reproach.

His mirth was easily controlled. It was quite superficial.

"Three months ago when—when we

arrived at our understanding I felt the need of—I mean—I began to go to church—that is, oftener—to early morning mass and——” She broke off with a little embarrassed cough, then went bravely on. “You have forgotten, perhaps, that we were not married by a priest. I have been to confession. The sacrament is denied to me unless you will consent to be married to me over again in our church.”

“But——”

“My happiness depends on it, Willis.”

“I’d like to oblige you, Evelyn, but I don’t like to swear a lie.”

“It wouldn’t be worse than the lie you are living. You always said a lie was justifiable if it created happiness.”

“Very well, that disposes of my lie. What about your own? How are you going to reconcile swearing to love, honor and obey till death and so on with your religion?”

“That’s a question concerning no one but myself, Willis.”

Her gentle dignity won his reverential respect.

“Very well,” he agreed, “if you wish it. Let me know when the—the day comes—and what—I forget what the preliminaries are.”

“My brother-in-law will help you,” she said.

He opened the door for her.

“Thank you, Willis,” and she passed out.

So it was church that had taken her out in the rain. His curiosity was satisfied anyway.

II

Mrs. Bowers’ apartment was crowded, but, as she remarked, there was always room for one more, even though the new addition was not the usual baby. Mrs. Seymour must live with her sister, commanded Mrs. Bowers, until the second marriage ceremony was performed. If Mr. Seymour wished to call any time during the intervening eight weeks—the date of the wedding being set two months hence—he would be welcome. Mr. Seymour demurred at the length of time he had to wait, but could offer no

reasonable excuse to have the ceremony earlier, could urge no summer plans with which the months of waiting would interfere.

His brain was kept active inventing excuses to call at the Bowers apartment. There was nothing he wished to say to Mrs. Seymour that could not be proclaimed from the housetops. Some trifling complaint about the housekeeping. At least it seemed trifling when he stammered about it to Mrs. Bowers. He thought with a keen sense of injury that Evelyn would not receive his troubles so lightly. But he scarcely saw her these busy days.

She was out, generally, when he called. She went to church a great deal, and there seemed a lot of shopping to be done. “The children,” Mrs. Bowers explained, after he had waited three hours for Evelyn to appear. The three eldest girls were to be bridesmaids and their aunt was superintending the making of their frocks.

“Bridesmaids?” gasped Mr. Seymour. “I thought it was to be a quiet wedding?”

“We won’t make a noise, uncle,” said one of the incipient bridesmaids.

“It’s natural Evelyn should want a real wedding this time. Let us hope the prayers of the church will bring blessings to your union,” said Mrs. Bowers, looking significantly at her own latest blessing asleep in her arms.

Mr. Seymour fled. He took refuge in correspondence for a few days, and wrote his complaint to Evelyn that her absence seemed to mix sand in the oil of the domestic machinery. Her replies were sent to the housekeeper.

He called several times with his car, suggesting a drive for his old and prospective bride. But his invitations were either refused, or accepted by the whole family. In the latter case he was perched beside the chauffeur, while Evelyn was squeezed in the back seat among the shoal of children. He had to admit that she seemed to enjoy it. Her frequent laughter was unaffectedly pure, like clear honey, he thought. She always had a pretty laugh, that was one of the charms that first attracted him. He turned and looked at her. Her radiant

face beamed above the head of the sleeping child on her lap. Two other small heads were pressed against her shoulders. The elder girls from the outer corners were leaning across their sisters, their eager, animated faces upturned to hers, chatting volubly.

"One would think those children hadn't seen you for months!"

His remark was greeted with a burst of childish laughter. Even Evelyn seemed to find it amusing.

"Wouldn't you be more comfortable in this seat, Evelyn? Harry could go back on the 'L' and I'll drive, myself, if you like. That will make more room for the children."

But Evelyn shook her head. "The children don't want my room, they want me," she said, and eight detaining arms gave instant evidence of that fact.

Mr. Seymour dreamed that night of sirens, long-armed, beautiful beckoning sirens, who lighted a fresh fire in his old furnace of a heart and revealed in the leaping flames flashing pictures of Evelyn. His brother-in-law called next morning. It was time to see about the license.

Mr. Seymour was drinking his coffee. The cup shook in his hand. It was perfectly absurd, but he felt a thrill of nervousness. He welcomed it. He smiled. His eyes grew so bright that Mr. Bowers wondered if he had been drinking.

Mr. Seymour had not intended providing new clothes for the ceremony. Mrs. Bowers had relieved his mind on the subject of guests. There were not to be any. A wedding breakfast at her house, herself, Mr. Bowers, and the children, that was all. But they were all having new clothes for the occasion, even the baby.

Mr. Seymour guessed he had better follow and get a suit. It was certainly a thrilling experience, selecting the cloth at the tailor's. He avoided the tailor he always patronized. The new man was delightfully sympathetic, so discerning, too. He saw the youthful spirit and ignored the gray hair of the man of forty-five. Mr. Seymour learned that his fig-

ure retained its youthful lines. His face? Well, one can't have everything. Evelyn's face was young, but her figure mature.

The tailor was very patient. It was natural a man should be particular about the fit of his wedding clothes.

When Benson laid them out on the eventful morning Mr. Seymour's youthful spirit was playing mischievous tricks with his face. Benson asked him with sympathetic concern if he had the toothache. Mr. Seymour swore, then begged Benson's pardon, then told him to go to the devil and help him dress. Didn't the everlasting blockhead know that his master was going to a wedding?

Benson meekly suggested a flower for his buttonhole. It must be a white flower, he said. And when it was carefully adjusted by his skillful fingers, he declared his master would make a handsome bridegroom himself.

A saccharine smile overspread Mr. Seymour's face, startling the valet, who, after watching his master drive off in the limousine, confided to the housekeeper his fears that Mr. Seymour was not—and tapped his forehead to complete the sentence.

"Anybody," Mr. Seymour thought, as he sat by his brother-in-law in one of the front pews, "anybody who called a church wedding a mere spectacle, a display of solemnity that did not exist, was a fool." He had never felt so solemn in his life. He glanced at the profile of Mr. Bowers. The latter was looking at Mr. Seymour's new pants. No doubt it was Mr. Seymour's fancy that the corner of his brother-in-law's mouth twitched. There was nothing amusing about Mr. Seymour's pants. They were correct in color and cut. True, there was a—a sort of vibration about them, but there was nothing to smile at in that evidence of a bridegroom's natural feelings.

The priest's face was the most benign, the most ascetic, the most holy countenance Mr. Seymour had ever gazed upon. "The sort of face"—he thought, as he stood beside Evelyn and fumbled in his pocket for the ring—Evelyn had

returned the old one to be used over again, but he had bought a new one, another thrilling experience. Mr. Seymour's thoughts had wandered. They were brought back to the priest's face by the words: "Wilt thou take this woman—" and his mind concluded—"the sort of face one could not look into and lie to."

A nudge from his brother-in-law wakened him to the fact that he was suspending the service. He glanced at Evelyn. Her sweet face was deadly white.

"I will," he shouted, his eyes square on those of the priest, "I mean I do, and that's no lie, either."

He slipped the ring on Evelyn's cold hand, and the next moment her limp

form was in his arms and he was passionately kissing her unconscious face. He brushed the crowding bridesmaids aside, was positively rude to his sister-in-law, and carried his bride to the vestry, where he insisted on being left alone with her until she came to.

In the kitchen of the Asbury Park bungalow, Mr. Seymour was taking a lesson in cooking.

"You see," explained Evelyn, all dressed up in red cheeks and white apron, as she held a hot loaf of bread she had just taken from the oven, "this loaf was stale; but I just placed it in a nice warm oven for a few minutes, and behold, it is as fresh and as crisp as ever!"

YETTA DAVINSKY'S MUFF

By Jeanette Sterling Gre

"MY fingers is that froze I'm most to cry. I wisht I could save enough to get me a muff this winter. I needs one awful."

Yetta Davinsky pulled off her gloves and stopped to lay red hands on the rusty steam pipes which conveyed the smallest possible amount of heat around the loft where she kept books for Goldstein & Miller, wholesale china merchants.

"The extravagance of some people!" commented Sophy Cohen, the firm's stenographer, who was already at her desk wiping off her typewriter with an inky rag. "You don't have so far to go from your house to the subway that your hands should get cold like that."

"Sure I do," Yetta protested. "Up in the upper end of the Bronx them stations is wide apart. And down here it's more'n four blocks over. I needs a muff all right, only I can't afford to get one." She took off her hat and patted her crisp, black hair.

"Well, why don't you make the old man give you a raise, then?" suggested Sophy. "Then you could be payin' for it on time."

"Yaw, but I gets the cold feet," Yetta replied as she hung her hat and coat on a hook beside her high desk. "I been tryin' to ask for my raise for a week, but every time Mr. Miller comes in the office I'm afraid."

"I don't see what you needs to be scared about," Sophy said genially. "They couldn't get nobody to do their book-keepin' for them for twelve dollars a week and good like you does it, and they knows it. They ought to pay you fifteen, already. If you was a man, now!"

"Oh, men! That's different! No man'll work for less than the rest of 'em gets; but if a woman asks for decent wages, they don't take her on, for they knows there's hundreds of other women waitin' to snap up the job for any old price. That's what scares me. If I should lose my job, now!"

"Don't I know it? Same here," Sophy admitted, gathering up note-book and pencils in response to a signal buzzed from the private office of Mr. Goldstein, senior member of the firm. "What with all them kids at home I suppose I oughta be satisfied with my seven per, yet a while. But I am goin' to make a break

for liberty. See if I don't. But I gotta skip. It always gives Goldy the grouch to be kep' waitin'."

Left to herself, Yetta mounted her tall stool and spread day-books and ledger out on the desk before her; but she found it difficult to fix her attention on the trial balance which had to be taken that day. She much preferred to figure on paying for the muff she longed to buy.

Yetta was the chief dependence of her widowed mother. She took home every Friday night the greater portion of the money in her pay envelope, reserving for herself little more than enough for carfare and her meagre lunches. Wherefore Mrs. Davinsky was not a little proud of her oldest daughter's position, and, in her eyes, princely salary. Having recently migrated from her native Yiddish into the suburbs, so to speak, of the English language, she was fond of telling the neighbors whom she met in the halls of the apartment house or at the grocery store, that "mine girl she gits the tin from off of china."

Yetta was obliged to forego much in the way of personal adornment, and only by the closest calculation could she obtain what she needed for comfort. On her present salary she could not afford the luxury of a muff. So while her swift fingers set down the long columns of debits and credits, and her busy brain added and subtracted the totals, the undercurrent of her mind was gathering resolution to make a demand for higher pay. Words of the petition she would offer shaped themselves in her thoughts, but a depressing conviction that she would fail in courage when the moment came to utter them tugged at her heart. She had mentally rounded off a polite period when she heard a soft footfall outside the partition which separated the tier of offices from the main floor of the loft. She looked around just in time to see the broad back of Mr. Miller, the junior partner, as he passed her door. Bracing herself to meet Opportunity, she called, imperatively,

"Mr. Miller! Come in here."

"Vell, vat iss it?" Mr. Miller asked in surprise. He came back and stood in

the doorway, his bushy gray eyebrows drawn down over the puffed lids behind which his black eyes sheltered themselves against a possible ambush.

Yetta waited to get the shake out of her voice.

"Vat you vant?" asked Mr. Miller, advancing farther into the compartment, his hands in his pockets.

Yetta laid down her pen and turned to face him, a spark of defiance, of which she was quite unaware, glowing in her dark eyes.

"I wants a raise," she said in breathless, staccato voice. "I wants three dollars." All her carefully framed request was broken and shattered into bits of the briefest verbiage.

"Vell!" Mr. Miller's thick lips puckered themselves into the semblance of a whistle. "Vell!" he said again, taking a fat hand out of his pocket and running the blunt fingers through his short, grizzled curls.

Yetta pressed her lips together to conceal their trembling, while Mr. Miller watched her.

"Ha! You gits it," he said suddenly and sharply, and then walked rapidly away.

Yetta returned to her task, but she scarcely saw the neat figures she was putting down. She could not believe she had heard aright. She did not think Mr. Miller really meant to grant her request. Then the realization of her peremptory manner, the recollection of Mr. Miller's surprise, overcame her, and in the revulsion of feeling she began to laugh, half hysterically. She shook in silent mirth as she bent over her books. A touch on her shoulder startled her.

"Say, now, Miss Davinsky!" It was Mr. Miller's voice at her ear. He spoke in low, cautious tones. "Don't you be cryin' now. You gits it, I tells you. Shust don't you make a strike on me. I puts three dollars extry in your pay envelope to-night yet. But see here; I wants dat you takes it from off of the travelin' men—not from off of me."

With his quick, noiseless step he passed out of the office and vanished into his own room. He was scarcely out of sight when Sophy returned.

"Say, Sophy, what you think!" was Yetta's excited greeting. "I gets my raise. Three dollars like you told me." "No!" the astonished Sophy exclaimed. Then she slammed her full note-book on the typewriter table. There was an indefinable change in her manner. "Huh! He's the easy mark," she sneered. "What'd he say?"

"Not a word. He just give it to me quick, soon as I asked him. Now I can get me a muff. I've saved seven dollars already. I'll pay that much down; then there'll be the three dollars a week until it's all paid and nothin' cut down on the money I takes home. I'll get me a good one. No cheap stuff in mine." Yetta jumped off her stool and seizing her companion around the waist, whirled her in an unwilling dance around the restricted floor space. When she paused, breathless, Sophy pushed her off impatiently. Sophy was tall and thin, with a pallid skin, disfigured by pimples, and rough, pale brown hair. She looked poorly nourished.

"I'm goin' this very day at lunch time to look for it. Come go with me," Yetta panted.

"Where at?" mumbled Sophy, her mouth full of safety pins. Her shirt waist had been loosened in Yetta's rough embrace and she was readjusting it.

"Oh, I don't know. Anywhere. Any of the fur stores around here is good enough. We won't have time to go very far uptown."

"Ain't you the simpleton, though?" Sophy snapped. "Don't you know how to buy no better'n that? You pays three or four times more'n you need to in them places. Ain't you got no friends in the fur trade that can do you a favor?"

"You surely have got the long head, Sophy." Yetta looked her admiration. "I wouldn't 'a thought o' that. Never!"

"Well, business is business, you know. When you wants somethin' you go to a friend that's in the trade and he sells it to you wholesale. Then when he wants somethin' in your line you gets it for him wholesale and he's got his money back." Sophy spoke wearily, without enthusiasm. She seated herself at the typewriter, her back towards Yetta.

"I don't believe I knows a soul," the latter said, coming around to stand beside her.

"There's Herman Manassa. Don't you never see him no more?" Sophy pretended to be busy arranging a carbon between two sheets of letter paper and did not look up.

"No, I ain't seen him since he used to set behind me in third grade. He used to tie my hair to the iron under the back of the seat. That's more'n nine years now. He's forgot all about me."

"No, he ain't, neither. He lives close by us in Brooklyn, and I see him sometimes, comin' over in the subway. I was tellin' him 'bout you the other day, how you'd come to our place to work. He said he 'sposed you didn't remember 'bout the time he stuck the end o' your braid in his ink-well and you turned around spiteful and spattered it all over his face." Sophy's voice was cold, belying the interest her words seemed to indicate, but Yetta was unobservant.

"Yes, I do, too," she laughed. "Teacher made us stand on the floor together that time for fightin', and him all dabbed over with ink like he was. And I made faces at him behind Teacher's back. He was mad like fury."

"Well, call him up on the 'phone and make a talk with him," Sophy suggested shortly. She opened her note-book and spread it out on the table beside her. "You can tell him I been speakin' to you 'bout him. Maybe somethin' more'n just buyin' a muff will come of it."

Yetta blushed. "'Tain't likely he'll be wantin' anythin' in china," she demurred. "Unless——. Say, Sophy," she urged in a burst of loyalty, "you and him might be thinkin' of each other. Then we could get you your china cheap. What about it?"

"Me! Oh, I ain't got a chance there," the sedate Sophy replied. "I'm a lots older'n him. My mother says I ain't got the way with me, neither. She says she's give up. She don't expect I'll ever be gettin' married. It does seem a shame," she went on bitterly, "me eatin' off o' her all this time. But I'd like to know who'd help the kiddies to get the

education if I quit workin' yet a while. There's five o' them."

"My mother was tellin' me last night she thinks it's time I should be married," Yetta meditated. "I've got three sisters comin' on after me, and she don't want no old maids off of us. I could 'phone him whilst I'm out to lunch. What kind of a lookin' fellow is Herman, anyway?"

"Oh, he'll pass; good looks don't count for nothin' with a man. You can use the 'phone in Mr. Miller's office at noon," Sophy urged, insinuatingly. "Him and Goldy's goin' to lunch together to-day. They was fixin' it up whilst I was in there takin' dictation. They're to set up a customer from out West. Must be expectin' to sell him a big bill o' goods. You call up Herman like I tells you."

"My, but you've got the sense," exclaimed Yetta. "I'll do like you say." Then, catching the sound of a softly opened door, she hastily climbed back on her stool and fell to figuring. She failed to see the sidelong glance with which Sophy's heavy-lidded eyes swept her; nor did she hear the murmur, "Little fool!" from that young lady's scornful lips. When Mr. Miller walked by only the clicking of the typewriter broke the profound stillness in the office.

After he and Mr. Goldstein had passed out of the loft and the clang of the elevator door assured her they were gone, Yetta jumped down.

"I'm goin' to call up Herman Manassa right now. I hope I won't get into trouble by usin' the 'phone here."

"Why should you?" Sophy persisted. "There's nobody here to know it."

"Oh, well, they can't any more'n kill me for usin' it. What's Herman's number? Do you know?"

"He's with the Meyerses. Their place is on West Broadway not very far from Chambers. The number's in the book."

"Why, that must be close by here. Maybe I can see him this noon yet." Yetta paused, irresolute. "Say, maybe I better go out to a public booth. They don't like us to use this 'phone, do they?"

"Oh, what's the matter with the kid?" Sophy exclaimed. "Would I be tellin' you if they didn't? Maybe you think

you're better'n other folks 'count o' your big salary and your three dollar raise. You ain't gettin' goody-goody, are you?" There was a fling of ill-feeling in her tone which Yetta at last felt, but did not understand.

Slowly, hesitatingly, Yetta stole along the passage to Mr. Miller's private office. Presently she came skipping back, light-footed, her eyes shining. She seized Sophy by the shoulders and shook her.

"Oh, Sophy, he's comin' here to see me—now—this noon. He's asked me to go out to lunch with him."

Sophy jerked herself loose. "What you doin' makin' me to make mistakes in this letter? I gotta do it all over again now. Goldy won't stand for no erasures."

"Oh, I'm so sorry, Sophy, sure I am," Yetta apologized. "I guess I was kinda excited 'bout Herman takin' me out to lunch."

"What of that?" Sophy snapped. "You ain't the first girl that's gone out to lunch with a fellow, are you?"

Yetta went around in front of her. "What's the matter, Sophy? Have you got a mad on with me? Have I done somethin' against you?"

"You make me tired; that's all," Sophy retorted angrily. "Braggin' 'bout your raise and your muff and gettin' a lunch give to you, and all. And other folks as is just as good as you never gets nothin' but hard work and no thanks for that. I asked Goldy for a raise for me this morning and he told me I better be glad to stay for seven—he could get a plenty o' girls for five or six, these times. Said that extra dollar or two was money he was just givin' me out of his own pocket!"

Yetta threw her arms about Sophy's neck, but the girl whirled on her.

"Let me loose, can't you? I don't want no whinin' over me. I ain't askin' for no sympathy; least of all from you!" All the bitterness engendered by her disappointment seemed to have concentrated itself against Yetta.

Puzzled and hurt, Yetta drew back. She stood quite still, wondering what she could say. But before words came, she heard the elevator door and then a

jaunty step approached, threading a way between the long tables laden with green-and-gold and fancily decorated china-ware.

"How de do, Miss Cohen? Make me acquainted with Miss Davinsky, please. This is her, ain't it?" A smartly dressed young man, his dark-green velour hat pushed to the back of his head, came in and held out a hand to each of the girls.

"Yes," said Sophy. "Meet Miss Davinsky, Mr. Manassa."

"Say, kid, but you've growed some since I used to know you in school," Herman observed. "You don't wear your hair hangin' down your back any more, neither."

Yetta giggled. "I wouldn't 'a' knowed you, neither. You ain't spattered with ink like you used to be—sometimes."

"Oh, quit your kiddin'!" Herman twirled an abbreviated mustache. "Get your things on. Didn't you promise to go out to lunch with me?"

"Sure," Yetta made answer. "I'll be ready in just a minute." She seized her hat and ran to a small mirror on the wall.

"Won't you go with us, Miss Cohen? We'd be glad o' your company," Herman said, politely.

"Huh! Don't I know when three's a crowd?" grunted Sophy. She discounted the gruffness of her remark by winking at Herman. The man returned the wink.

"Ain't she the little peach?" he asked, nodding toward Yetta, who was busy before the mirror, studying the best angle at which to perch her hat.

"Love at first sight, hey?" Sophy teased; but she turned an unsmiling face to Yetta when the latter laughed good-by over her shoulder as she followed Herman out.

In the nipping air outside the young man drew Yetta's hand within his arm.

"Where's your muff, kid?" he asked. "Your fingers'll freeze in them kid gloves."

Yetta shivered a little. She put up her free hand to draw her coat-collar closer about her throat.

"And no fur collar, neither?" he add-

ed. "Nothin' but this thin coat. You oughta have a nice set o' furs. Why don't girls dress sensible like men? You oughta wear a thick overcoat like mine, now."

"Oh, well, men! That's different!" Yetta remarked—for the second time that morning. "Men can have what they likes. It's the women that goes without." She trotted along beside him, a little breathless from the rapid pace with which they threaded the crowds pouring into the dim and dismal streets from countless lofts and stores.

"Goin' too fast for you?" Herman asked, solicitously. "I wants to get you in out o' the cold quick as I can. It ain't far to a good restaurant I knows around here. You eats kosher, of course?"

"Sure." Yetta nodded brightly. "I wouldn't risk my good health with the trash they cooks at them other places."

The eating place he had selected was on the second floor of an old dwelling which had long since forsaken a genteel private life for the degenerative pursuit of a business career. Herman chose a remote table in an alcove where they were insured a measure of seclusion.

"Now then!" he exclaimed, well pleased. "I ain't a-goin' to ask you what you'll have. I'm a-goin to set you up to the best meal I can get." He nodded to a waiter. "Fetch us all you got, son. Noodle soup and fish and chicken and all the fixin's. Never spare expense when there's ladies to be fed."

"Oh, but," Yetta protested, "that's a dinner—not a lunch. Don't you be spendin' all that money on me, Mr. Manassa."

"Say, but you are a greeny," Herman retorted, fixing her, however, with an admiring eye. "The other girls I takes out always tries to get all they can out o' me. You just let me attend to this little matter."

"Oh, course, I'll eat," Yetta laughed. "I'm that hungry I could eat the plates. But I'm afraid you're a spendthrift, Mr. Manassa."

He leaned forward, elbows on table, his fingers busily twisting the inadequate ends of his mustache.

"Why 'Mr. Manassa'?" he asked. "Can't you make it 'Herman,' like it used to be in school?" His full-orbed eyes were very close to hers.

"Well, Herman, then!" And she flushed a deep red under her clear, olive skin.

As if to make good the threat of her appetite, she did ample justice to the meal which was soon set before them; and while she ate she chatted of her work, of Sophy's goodness to the little brothers and sisters at home, of Mr. Miller's peculiarities, her own younger sisters, her hard-working mother, and the many trivial incidents and amusements which gave zest to her days. Herman listened with deepening interest.

"I say!" he exclaimed at last. "But you ain't a bit the bashful little thing you used to be in school. You flings the dust all over the rest of the girls I knows."

"Oh, I ain't changed much," she murmured. "But when it comes to you, now!"

"Well, what about me?" he demanded. "You ain't told me yet what you do think o' me." He leaned back in his chair, fingering his mustache self-consciously. She mischievously ignored his very obvious appeal for a compliment to that appendage.

"Oh, it wouldn't do to tell," she said. "I ain't handin' out bouquets to-day."

"Oh, come now," he urged, forced to a frontal drive by her flanking tactics. "What do you think o' me? And you haven't mentioned this. What about it?"

"Oh, that! Why, it's such a—such a comfortable little mustache." Yetta pronounced judgment with a laugh and Herman joined in her merriment.

"You oughta laugh all the time," he said, appraising her critically. "You look so pretty with all that gold in your teeth. You've got a lot of it."

"Yes, twenty dollars worth," Yetta proudly admitted. "I had an awful time last year payin' for it, too. But I did it. It's all clear."

"Think of having a wife with all that gold in her mouth!" Herman mused, half to himself.

Yetta jumped up from the table, sud-

denly conscious of the thinned crowd in the room.

"Oh, my, I'm late! I was havin' that good a time I forgot all about the office. Whatever'll Mr. Miller do to me!" She hastily donned her coat while Herman settled with the waiter.

Out in the street again, he reverted to the muff. "Say, kid, you can't go through the winter like this with no way to keep your hands warm. Let me get you a muff, now. We got some beauties down to our place."

"I couldn't let you give me one, you know," Yetta replied with dignity. "But I have been wantin' one. Could you sell me one cheap? I got a little money saved to pay down, and I could pay the rest by the week."

"Sure I could! What kind o' fur would you like now? Fox or mink?" Business enthusiasm took possession of him. "Mink's awful expensive; and fox don't wear so well—it's only for the style of it. I wouldn't recommend it to a friend. But there's skunk, now. Skunk's the thing for you. It wears forever. So rich lookin', too!" Almost he seemed to be smoothing down a soft pelt, so unctuously he spoke. "I can let you have a good, six-skin skunk muff, already, seein' it's you, for thirty-seven dollars. And that's dirt cheap. I wouldn't do it for anybody else."

"But don't skunk fur smell awful?" Yetta ventured to protest.

"Smell? Course it smells! That's the beauty of it. That's how you know it's the real thing. Can't nobody fool me on skunk fur! I got the very thing for you. You just leave it to me."

"But thirty-seven dollars is an awful lot o' money. Seems like I oughta get something cheaper," she objected.

"A girl like you oughta have the best that's goin'," he answered. "Besides, it ain't economy to buy cheap stuff."

"Yes, I knows that," Yetta admitted. "I wants as good as I can get."

When he left her at the elevator shaft he promised to call for her that same evening at closing time and bring her the muff he had in mind.

When Yetta hurried into the office Sophy and Mr. Miller were standing to-

gether beside her vacant desk. Sophy turned without looking at her and sat down before the typewriter.

"So," growled Mr. Miller, "dot iss de vay you makes mine business. Half an hour late you comes. And abbointments you makes mit young men to take you out to lunch! Vot kind of goin's on you calls dot?"

Yetta quaked under his accusation.

"I'm very sorry I come back late, Mr. Miller," she said, humbly. "I was to lunch with a boy I used to be in school with. And I didn't notice the time."

"No, of course not. And I suppose you don't notice dot you calls up your school boy in mine office, hein? I tells you I don't vant no such girls by me." His eyes flickered over Sophy's bent back.

"Oh!" Yetta was enlightened. "Mr. Miller," she began. But Mr. Miller was already speeding noiselessly to his own door. Like a fury she turned on Sophy.

"So it was you, was it, that was tellin' lies about me to Mr. Miller behind my back? I might 'a known you was fram-in' somethin', so awful anxious you was to get me to go in there to the 'phone! And now I suppose I loses my job through you."

"You needn't be blamin' me that Mr. Miller ketches on to you," Sophy said, coldly, without looking up.

"Oh, no, and I needn't be blamin' you for tattlin', neither, nor for makin' up what ain't so about askin' men to take me out to lunch. I couldn't 'a' believed you was two-faced like that," said Yetta. She tore off her hat and coat as she spoke and tossed them on a chair, whence they fell to the floor.

Sophy wheeled around. All the color in her face seemed to have receded to her eyes, which were blazing; her lips were drawn to a thin, hard line.

"Two-faced I'm not, and I'll thank you not to say it," she said in a low, fierce tone. "You, who comes in here and gets the big wages and the big raises you wants, the minute you asks for 'em! And then spends 'em on muffs! Muffs! When there's your betters often wantin' somethin' to put in their mouths. It's rotten, that's what I say it is."

"But, Sophy, surely you know I ain't done nothin' to spite you." Yetta's voice quavered. "You acts like you was jealous, else why should you go and—and——" A burst of tears interrupted her. She could not finish.

Dabbing her eyes with her handkerchief, she climbed up on her stool. Sophy made no reply. And the icy silence that ensued freighted the heavy hours throughout the long, lagging afternoon.

When closing time came Yetta's face was red and swollen with weeping. Abundant dashes of cold water administered in the lavatory failed to remove the traces of tears. Afraid to stay for fear of laying herself open to the accusation of waiting for Herman; ashamed to go for fear of meeting him with her red eyes, she lingered in the washroom as long as she dared. When at last she emerged, Herman was waiting at her office door. A large muff, dark-brown, sleek and glossy, was in his hand. He followed her into the compartment and held the muff out to her.

"Here it is, kid. Ain't she a beauty? Worth every cent o' sixty dollars. You couldn't get such a handsome one no-where but by us." Then he caught sight of her tear-stained face. "My eye!" he exclaimed. "What's the trouble? Has anythin' happened since I seen you?"

Yetta's glance traveled to Sophy's averted face. In cool disdain that young lady buttoned her coat and drew on her gloves.

"I—I guess I can't take the muff," Yetta murmured, tears threatening her again. "Maybe I loses my job because I come late this noon and because I 'phoned from here—and spoke with you——"

Herman nodded understandingly. He laid the muff on Yetta's desk.

"That muff is on me, see!" he said. "And see here, Miss Cohen, if you got anything on Miss Davinsky, you settle it with me. I'll be lookin' after her from now on, I guess."

"Seems like you're the muff she's managed to get for herself," the astute So-

phy remarked, with sweet acerbity, as she strove to pass him.

But Mr. Miller stood in the doorway. The sound of Herman's angry voice had penetrated his private office, and he had come, unheard, down the passage.

"Mine Gott!" he gasped. "And you brings your school boys to my office, Miss Davinsky! Vot kind of a girl iss you, anyway?"

Herman stepped up to him. "I guess you been makin' mistakes about Miss Davinsky, Mr. Miller. She's all right, though there is some as makes speeches about her behind her back. I guess I gives you a month's notice for her now; hey, Yetta?"

Yetta gave him a shy glance and

flushed clear up to the roots of her hair.

"So!" growled Mr. Miller, drawing his puffy eyelids together until he looked out through narrow slits. "So dot's de vay it goes, hein? You comes here and takes my good book-keeper away, does you? Vell!" He scratched his head soberly. Then he turned to Yetta. "I asks you to oxcuse me, Miss Davinsky, for dot impression I makes on you to-day. I don't vant dot you go, but girls vill be girls." He held out his hand to shake hands.

As she took it, Yetta said, happily, "And when I goes, you gives my place to Sophy, won't you, Mr. Miller? She keeps books better than me, and it's good for the business if you gets a cheap stenographer."

THEIR THIRD ANNIVERSARY

By Harold de Polo

MARVIN WEST vehemently cursed himself for being such a dolt as to come to the Palatial, when there were dozens of equally good hotels in big New York, for every little thing brought up memories that were far from pleasant. By what perverse streak of idiocy he had put up here he could not tell. Possibly the old axiom of the murderer eventually returning to the scene of his crime; in his case, though, it was the scene of what had been the happiest moment in his life. Here it was that he and Madge had come, the day they were married, before sailing to Paris for their honeymoon. And now, exactly three years later to the day, here he was alone—divorced!

But what a consummate fool he had been to come to the place! The table, where he was now lunching, was but one removed from that which they had occupied that first night; the waiter, stout, pompous, imperturbable, was the very same who had served them that evening; and even the green and gold uniformed boy, flitting about as he paged people in an unintelligible rumble, he recognized as the one who had delivered

a telegram to them on that memorable event. Gad, what a beastly idiot he was to have come! Savagely he attacked his English mutton chop, for he realized, more than ever, that he still loved Madge; had loved her always, although he had not admitted it after the divorce. Yes, he had deliberately tried to instill the belief into himself that he didn't care, but now the lie came home and he found it utterly impossible to further delude his own heart.

Madge! Where was she now, he wondered. He had not seen her since over a year ago, a trifle after her divorce had been granted. And again, what a fool he had been to allow her to get one, instead of trying to patch it up and arguing it out sanely. Now, thinking it all over, he knew that it might have been averted. It had all been so foolish, so thoroughly unnecessary. Youth more than anything else; sheer, hopeless youth. Incompatibility—incompatibility! Lord, what awful rot. Somehow, they had always fought about the little unimportant things, and he smiled whimsically as he remembered a few of them.

She liked blue, and had worn it a great

deal. He had professed not to, and had always spoken forcibly on the subject, so much so that many a night, when they had argued for hours, they had ended by going to separate parts of the house. Then there had been steak. Both were fond of it, extremely so; but he liked his rare—almost raw—and she preferred hers burnt to a crisp. Again, they had constantly disagreed about the maids; they were too sloppy, they did not serve correctly, they were unutterably homely; they—— Anyway, so it had gone. Arguing, arguing, continuously arguing about those insignificant details that might so easily have been straightened out had they taken the time to talk it over in a sane manner.

But it had been hard for two people—the man but twenty-four and the girl but twenty—to look on the thing in the right way, especially when each had been the family pride and had been used to having every infinitesimal wish immediately granted. Yes, now that he had been divorced a year and knew that he had lost the being he loved more than all else in the world, he was sure that if they had been just a bit older, had not had things go entirely their own way, the thing would never have ended up by Madge going off to Reno and securing her freedom with his full permission.

And he still loved her—still loved her madly. Oh, Lord, what a fool he'd been to come to this place! But he must admit it; he had come because he had wanted to look on the scene that had been the happiest of his life, there was no getting away from it. What a fool, what a fool! How he'd love to see her again, just once; how he'd love to have but a few brief moments with her and see the merry, dancing light in those big blue eyes of hers! They were always laughing, those eyes, all of which made it seem the more ridiculous that they had quarreled so seriously. But just to see her once more—just once! So poor Marvin dreamed, ever and ever dubbing himself a hopeless idiot for not having been a bit wiser and a bit more sensible!

Suddenly, as he looked up to beckon the waiter, Marvin West felt his heart leap high in his throat and his body go

trembling. Just entering the room, clad in a swagger, faultlessly fitting blue broadcloth suit, was Madge! Madge—Madge! There was no mistaking that *chic* figure, so well balanced and so full of young life; there was no mistaking that fair, oval face, with its big blue eyes and delicate mouth, that face topped with her silky, golden hair! For an instant he blinked his eyes, almost believing himself to be dreaming; but no, it *was* Madge, and she was seating herself but two tables away. At the very table, indeed, where they had dined that night!

For a while Marvin sat there, with wide eyes, simply gazing at her. She was seated with her back toward him and had not seen, and bitterly he continued reviling himself for having been such a fool as to have lost her. But then, with a click of his jaws, he determined to muster up his courage and walk across and greet her. Surely she would not ignore him; the publicity of the thing would keep her from doing that, even though she might like to. Then, if she didn't want to speak to him, he could leave. Yes, he'd go over, though, and see whether or not she would receive him.

Rising, he pulled himself together and walked to her side. Pausing at her table, he felt his heart almost in his very mouth and his own voice sounded strange to him:

"Hello—Madge!" He had thought of saying something else, something quite brilliant, but the words had refused to come.

At the words she started, turning her head hastily and looking at him with incredulous eyes and gradually reddening cheeks. It was a full minute before she spoke:

"Hello—Marvin!"

So, for a moment, they stayed. Then, realizing that it might promote comment, he gathered his wits and asked, very, very humbly: "Might I sit down—just for a little—please?"

Silently she nodded, and he took his chair across the table.

"Are you stopping here?" she asked presently.

"Yes. And you?"

"Yes!"

More silence, while each gazed helplessly at the table, like two children caught playing truant.

"You're looking well—awfully well," he said at last.

"So are you, Marvin," she replied, getting more command of herself.

The man smiled and there was a twinkle in his eyes. "You—ah—that's a perfectly *bully* suit you've got. Wonderfully becoming color!"

Her eyes answered his smile, all the old roguishness he so loved instantly coming into them: "Really? You know, though, I rather more fancy a stunning brown I've been thinking of having made!"

Marvin flushed, then returned the smile. "Brown? Oh, I don't know, it seems almost impossible for you to get a better color than that blue!" The former, by the way, had been the one he had always fought for and which she had never used.

The waiter, standing by, coughed discreetly. Madge looked up. "Oh, I've kept you waiting; but just a moment. Marvin, won't you join me in lunch?"

Now Marvin had eaten quite sufficient; nevertheless, he grasped out at this chance of seeing her longer. "Why, if I'm not intruding, you know, I'd be immensely glad!"

She smiled charmingly. "Good. Cocktail, Marvin?"

He gave the order cheerfully, and most promptly. "Manhattan!"

She looked up at him with her piquant face. "Really? You always used to insist so on a Martini, you know, and I——"

He cut in hastily. "No. Learned better since then. Manhattan's the only thing worth while!" Lord, how he hated them, though; and there came to his mind the many occasions on which they had argued and fought, delaying dinner for as much as an hour, in discussing the relative value of a Manhattan and a Martini!

"Two Manhattans, then. We'll think of what else we wish as we drink them."

Marvin bravely sipped his cocktail with all the gusto in the world, praising

it unstintingly, and then asked her if she were stopping here for long. Reddening and with averted face, she lightly replied that she was. Really, it *was* quite the best place in the city, you know, wasn't it?

Agreeing with her, he asked her a direct and manlike question. It had seemed to come to his lips in spite of himself:

"Remember the last time we were here?"

She turned, her brow creased thoughtfully. "Why—why, let me see," she pondered, "wasn't it the last time we came in from Larchmont and finished up the supper party so late that we decided to stay in town overnight?"

Out of the corner of her eye she watched the pain on his face. Then it became very haughty, very dignified, very cool. "Really," he answered, his voice bored, "I myself have quite forgotten, also!"

"Have you?" she asked, innocently, her eyes wide.

Suddenly he remembered that this was one of the reasons they had formerly fought, this sheer idiocy in getting angry and taking umbrage at slight things. Possibly, too, she was quizzing him, although her face was deadly serious. Anyway, what was the use of rowing now?"

"No," he laughed frankly, with his boyish smile, "I haven't! It was exactly three years ago, to-day, when we were married!"

"So it was, Mar——"

But the patient waiter really could not be blamed for coughing, and Madge had to give him her attention while Marvin silently cursed him long and fervently.

"Very hungry, Marvin?"

"Not *tremendously* so," he courteously replied, groaning inwardly at the thought of eating more food.

"Neither am I. But listen, what do you say to a nice little steak with baked, stuffed potatoes?"

"Fine—fine," he answered, remembering that she had always liked French fried. Oh, well, perhaps she was doing it because of his having taken a Manhattan.

"Waiter, you may bring us a sirloin—*very* thick and *very* rare! And stuffed baked potatoes. That is all, now!"

Marvin half rose from his chair to stop the man. "Oh, I say, Madge, that's not right. Come now, you *always* insisted on having your steak frightfully well done. Really, change the order—do!"

Again that raising of the eyebrows that had always fascinated him and made him long to take her in his arms and kiss her—and now it did more than ever.

"No, Marvin. Do you know that I honestly have learned to like it that way. Ah—Dick always takes it so too, you know!"

Marvin bit his cheek in anger. Dick, Dick? Who in the devil *was* Dick? And hang the beast, anyway! Dick liked it that way; huh, Dick liked it that way! Oh, well, it wasn't *his* place to get mad. Lord, wasn't it her right to inform him that another man happened to like steak the way he did? But—but *damn* the other fellow, whoever he might be.

Things were going so smoothly and he was having such an enjoyable time that he wanted to do nothing that might possibly terminate it. And again, with a whimsical smile, he realized that but a little over a year ago neither one of them would have taken the slightest trouble to agree with the other. In fact, they would deliberately have sought an opening for an argument, gloried in it. Since the divorce, though, he knew that he—and probably she, as well—had found that one must occasionally put oneself out for other people. Yes, what children they had been—what silly youngsters!

"Seen any of the good shows lately?" he asked.

"Oh, yes. The other night I—" and so she went along, trippingly telling her opinion of the latest musical comedy that was playing to capacity houses.

Marvin, too, had seen the production. Usually, though, they had been in the habit of taking opposite sides, regardless of true opinions. Now, for some reason, he agreed with her entirely, even lauding the show which he hadn't cared

so *very* much for, at greater length and with greater fervor than she had. So, for a while, they discussed the theatre, agreeing beautifully.

Marvin, as they talked, was not thinking much of the subject. He was deriding and damning himself, trebly more than before, for having ever been such an idiot as to lose this pretty and charming woman before him. If they'd only been less hasty, less quick to jump to conclusions and find fault. God, what he had lost—what he had lost! If only he had his chance over again; he was sure that now, matured as he was—as they both were—things would go smoothly. By—by Jove, what was the matter with asking her? Why, certainly; why not? It was his privilege, wasn't it—any man's privilege! She was free and he could do it as well as anyone else! Yes, he'd ask her to marry him again, and the worst that could possibly happen would be a refusal! But—but, good Lord, suppose she'd married without his having heard of it—just suppose—

Trying his best to appear nonchalant and utterly unconcerned as to the answer, he finished the last of his steak and spoke lightly:

"Oh, I say, Madge. Married again?"

Madge, with her mischievous twinkle, had been watching his face closely without his knowing it. Now her own crimsoned and she dropped her head, her voice coming out soft and low and halting:

"Yes! I—have!"

It was difficult for Marvin to control himself, but he managed it fairly well. All his world, built up for the second time, crumbled sadly about him in innumerable pieces. God, what a horrible blow! Here he had been fondly dreaming of again proposing to Madge and patching up their foolish quarrel and starting life over again with the right idea! He wondered if he was showing his disappointment; and then a thought came to him. By—by George, she must not think that she was the *only* one who'd forgotten; no, not by a long shot!

He cleared his throat and essayed his mightiest to laugh heartily. "Congrats,

Madge. How about giving me the same, eh?"

Now it was she who was surprised. She raised her head, her blue eyes wide and with a certain frightened look in them which he did not see.

"You, too?" she asked, keeping her voice well in check.

He grinned nobly and lied convincingly. "Yep. Just a couple of months ago!"

Madge, gaily congratulating him, went rattling on to other topics, skipping from one to another with maddening ease and rapidity. She appeared a trifle nervous, though he did not notice it, as if she must not allow a moment's pause to break the conversation. Marvin, stolidly listening, answered her in dull, abrupt monosyllables. He wished, now, that they would finish the *demi-tasse* and French pastry; wished it more than anything else in the world. He wanted to get away, alone, lock himself in his room and curse himself as long as he had breath to utter what a blind, colossal idiot he had been!

Madge, though, seemed to take endless time in sipping her coffee, and his thoughts continued throbbing through his brain. How wonderful she was; more wonderful than ever. How big and wistful and appealing and roguish her blue eyes; how soft and warm and kissable her delicate mouth; how gorgeous her thick, silky, golden hair! And how changed she seemed, how utterly different—quite in the same way as he, too, had changed. Yes, he felt sure that they would have been able, now, to get on perfectly. Damn the fellow who'd dared marry her; if he could get his hands on him he'd choke him to death, nothing less! But why didn't she hurry? Lord, she might be at the thing half an hour longer. No, he couldn't stand it, that was all—simply couldn't! He'd make some excuse and get away immediately!

Hastily he pulled out his watch. "By—by Jove, Madge, for Heaven's sake please excuse me, won't you? Got a vitally important appointment further downtown—twenty minutes late already.

You understand, don't you? See you some other time, if I may!"

He did not see her bite her lips hard; he saw only the smile there. "Surely," she answered, "I quite understand. You must—must remember me to Mrs. West, if you will!"

How beautiful she was. God, what he had lost. What a fool—what a fool! He hardly heard her words and had completely forgotten what he had told her; but the last sentence caused him to come to with a start:

"Eh? Mrs. West?"

"Yes, to the present Mrs. West—your wife!"

Hazily he remembered. "Eh? I—oh—yes—quite so—I——" But then, as he caught the old familiar little raising of the brows he so loved, he shot back into his seat, leaned far over the table, and poured out his words in a swift, low, tense torrent:

"Wife—wife? There is no wife—there never *will* be any—now! I can't help it and know that I shouldn't say it. I was a fool, of course, to tell you that I'd married. I couldn't have, I never can, with you always and always before me! Don't stop me, Madge, for even if you are married I've got to have my say and get it over with, right or wrong. I came here, to-day, because it *was* our third anniversary. I'll admit it to you now, although I didn't even want to admit it to myself before. But it's the truth; I came here to think of—memories. And what a hell it's been; God, what a horrible, torturing, agonizing hell! I tell you, though, that first I was happy, deliriously so.

"I know I've changed during the last year and that you have, too. We've grown older—though in only a year—and I can see that we've both learned a great deal. We're not the fools we once were, I know, and if we'd known as much about sheer plain common sense two years ago, or three, we'd never have made that damnable mistake. Seeing you to-day and realizing how much we've both changed, I—I was going to ask you to marry me and try again—this very day, this very minute! And now—now to find that you're married to

someone else nearly drives me wild. I can't stand it, for I love you as much and more than I ever did. I've always loved you and you know it, but we were just two foolish kids who'd always had their own way and couldn't have it brooked in the slightest degree—that was the only trouble. Now, though, we've both found out differently and— And here you are married, married, married! I love you—love you, love you! I can't help it, but I do, and if I could once get my hand on him, I'd kill the man who's taken you from me and also killed my second and only chance. I love you, love you, love you! I——" He paused, brushing his hand across his forehead and smiling weakly. "Excuse me, please, for having lost my head. I've had a bad blow. Wasn't right of me to tell you this, but it just came out of my heart without my being able to stop it and I—— Oh, well, forgive me and—good-by!"

He rose slowly, as if worn out from sheer bodily and mental fatigue. He held out his hand, a saddened, whimsical smile on his face.

Madge's eyes were a trifle dim and there was a tender expression on her face—but Marvin saw only a hazy blur. Then the roguish twinkle came to her eyes and the inimitable mischief came into her face.

"But, Marvin," she asked, with her wistful smile, "why *under* the sun get so excited about it all and insist on telling me how much you love me when you've just informed me, only a moment or so ago, that you *never* will marry again?"

He flushed angrily, his voice harsh. "Don't be cruel, Madge. That's not fair. You know why I said that—I said it when I learned that you were married

—and I mean it. I don't want anyone else!"

"Dear me, how perfectly horrid. I was just about to accept your kind offer, sir, and——"

"You—you *what?*"

"To accept your kind offer, which you now seem to wish to withdraw!"

"But you're—you're *married!*"

"My dear, hasn't it occurred to you that I, too, might possibly have made some such statement without meaning it any more than you did?"

"Madge—Madge! You—you *mean* it?"

For once her lightness deserted her at the joy on his face. Dumbly, with wet eyes and a little choke, she nodded her head affirmatively.

Wildly, with his face glowing with unalloyed bliss, Marvin beckoned the waiter, signed for the check, and hurried her out of the room.

"Quick. We're going to jump right into a taxi and get over to Jersey—where we don't need a license. Right away, this very minute. Then we'll come right back and celebrate here, on our third anniversary, all over again. And if you can still stand it, by Jove, we'll have steak, well-done steak, burnt steak! And Manhattan cocktails, and French-fried potatoes, and—and everything—anything! And we'll stop, on the way back, and buy bunches of nice filmy, flimsy, lacey things of blue, all blue, eh?" He laughed boyishly as he handed her into the taxicab.

Glowingly, but with eyes that were even now roguish, she faced him. "No, Marvin. We'll have the steak and things, if you want, but we *won't* get blue. We'll get—*brown!*"

You can't blame him for kissing her then, can you?



"DORFY DO"

By Lucy Stone Keller

"**G**REAT CAESAR!" ejaculated Baird Dunstan to the porch post. He straightened his back-tilted chair with a jerk, and stared at the little vine-covered cottage over the hedge, into which the fair-haired woman had just gone.

It was a pretty cottage, snuggling behind its palms and vines. Somehow it looked far cozier and homier than its myriad brothers and sisters grouped about the big beach hotel. But it was the woman who had come up the narrow walk, her arms piled high with yellow daisies, who had caused Dunstan's surprised comment.

He had not seen her for ten years; but she might have stepped directly out of yesterday, so little changed she was. The years had left her still the same golden-haired, frank-eyed Dorothy Cameron, with the same uptilt to her rounded chin. He tipped back again in his wicker chair and a peculiar reminiscent smile played queerly on his square, hard face.

"Poor little girl, how she *did* love me!" he confided to the post.

It must be said for Baird Dunstan that he had always been sorry for Dorothy Cameron and that he had always felt a true sportsman's admiration for her gameness. Also, it must be said that it was less easy for him to break his engagement to her than any one imagined, but Baird Dunstan had ever held firm mastery over his feelings. But even yet, when something caused that unforgettable, joyous smile of hers to flash through his memory, he experienced a strange little sensation to which he gave no name, and which he promptly dispelled.

From the first she had looked at the matter broadly and sensibly, realizing that a man of his capabilities and ambition could ill afford to be hampered with

a poor and unsophisticated wife; especially since one of wealth and social prestige awaited him.

So he had married Elizabeth Ford and Elizabeth Ford's money, and he had climbed on every dollar of it. Never for an instant had his satisfied pride in his lovely, accomplished wife presented itself in contrast to the quiet comradeship that had rested between him and Dorothy.

He wondered, as he thought of it, that Dorothy had never found anyone to fill his place—and pitied her the more, though she had looked happy hastening up the walk with her arms full of blossoms and the sunlight falling on her face. Evidently the years had fallen round her lightly, even as they had done with Elizabeth, who mothered her beauty so carefully. He motioned to a boy.

"Who lives in this cottage right here?" he asked carelessly. "I thought I saw an old friend of mine just now."

"Why, a banker from Denver, sir. They take that place every summer—got the swellest little kid you ever saw. Everybody's crazy about that kid. Their name's Drew."

"I guess I was mistaken, then," drawled Dunstan, digging lazily for a tip.

"They've got a cousin livin' with them, too—peach of a young lady, sir," added the boy craftily.

"A Miss Cameron?" suggested Dunstan casually.

"B'lieve so, sir. Yep, I've heard 'em call her that. Thank you, sir."

Dunstan settled back comfortably with a fresh cigar to wait for Elizabeth to join him before walking to the beach for the sunset. But before his cigar was half finished he was again interrupted by another occupant of the vine-covered cottage.

There, in the opening of the hedge, framed in the level rays of yellow sunshine, stood a sturdy, wonderfully lovely baby girl. Her sandaled feet were planted far apart and her tousled head shamed the gold of the sunlight. One chubby fist grasped the handle of a tin sand-bucket, the other swung a dilapidated shovel against her soiled white dress.

The perfect little face was very serious as with uplifted chin she scanned the wide porch of the great hotel, paying not the slightest attention to the many greetings that floated down from the scattered loungers above. Unable to find the face she sought, she raised her head still higher and shrilled:

"Unc'a Tom! Unc'a Tom!"

"All right, chick," called a big voice from around a corner, and when Baird Dunstan saw the man who followed it he intensified his first remark to the porch post into a mystified,

"Well, I *will* be damned."

"That's a rich chap from Honolulu," the attentive bellboy informed him over his shoulder. "He's awful keen on Miss Cameron. Folks say——"

"The devil he is," muttered Dunstan, and laughed aloud. So old slow Tom Donthal, his chum of knee-pants days, who always had fought battles for Dorothy, was going to win her at last. He watched Donthal descend the steps, three at a time, and fling the laughing baby to his shoulders. Dunstan rose and went to meet him as he came back up with his envied burden.

"Hello, Tom, let's go swimming down in Baker's pasture."

Surprised recognition flashed over the other man's face, and a tinge of some emotion which made Dunstan remember that Donthal was one of the friends he had lost when he had ended his affair with Dorothy. And as circumstances had arranged themselves, such a feeling was not surprising.

Donthal lowered the baby to his left arm and extended his right one slowly.

"Well, Baird Dunstan, I'm on! Even the ocean hasn't anything on Baker's pool. But I thought nothing could induce you to try anything but little old

New York. When did you come?"

"Last night. Of course we never summer in the city. And this season we thought we'd try this much-sung Californian climate."

"Great dope," agreed Donthal. "Your wife with you?"

"Oh, yes, certainly." Dunstan smiled inwardly at the quick suspicion in Donthal's voice, as though even the slightest interest might be feared from a man with a wife like Elizabeth.

"Tum on," commanded the baby, "let's do sumfin. Here, take my pail," and she extended both pail and shovel to Dunstan, who took them awkwardly; while their owner scrambled to the floor and reached up a hand to each of the two men. Dunstan was acutely conscious of the damp, clinging little fingers as they walked to two chairs somewhat apart from the others. He felt a shaken, rather shamed sensation and was relieved when they reached the chairs and Donthal lifted her to his knees, where she stared at Dunstan solemnly and reached out for her bucket. She was certainly lovely. He suddenly wanted to feel again the moist clutch of those tiny fingers, so he held his hands toward her.

"Come over and see me a while," he urged and felt strangely nonplussed when she nestled back against Donthal and shook her head at him. The up-tilt of her dimpled chin was strangely familiar. He remembered that all of Dorothy's people had it.

"I've runned away adain," stated the baby. "Muvver's lookin' for me."

"You rascal," laughed Donthal, "I shall take you right back."

"Don't take her for a minute. What's your name, baby?" asked Dunstan, and grinned sheepishly at the cooing sweetness of his voice.

"Dorfy Do."

"Dorothy Drew," translated Donthal.

"Oh, and how old are you, Dorothy?"

"Free tandles."

"Three candles—she had them on her cake last week," again explained Donthal, proudly rocking back and forth, one big hand patting the small tanned leg. Dunstan became slowly conscious

of an actual envy of Donthal's unembarrassed possession of the dirty little bit of beauty.

"Haven't you any children, old man?" asked Donthal.

"No. Neither of us care for children and—well, I guess we've never had time for them."

"Oh," said Donthal, then after a second's silence, "I'm crazy about 'em myself. But I guess you've been pretty busy all right. I hear you've climbed to the top."

"I haven't done so badly," Dunstan acknowledged. "When I think it over, I guess I've got more out of life than I ever expected, and that's about all a man can ask. It looks like you've done pretty well yourself."

"Oh, but I haven't got all I want—yet," laughed Donthal, and Dunstan's queer, quick glance made his cheeks redden slightly under their tan. "But I'm going to get the thing I want most next month," he added simply.

Dunstan looked away—over at the happy cottage across the hedge. He felt unaccountably like a fool.

"I'm mighty glad to hear it," he said heartily. "The bellboy prophesied as much when I first glimpsed you a minute ago. By the way, are Miss Cameron and her cousin much alike?"

"Greatly. Of course, Miss Cameron is several years younger. Have you seen Dorothy?"

"I just caught a glimpse of her. She doesn't look a day older than when—" he stopped awkwardly, but was saved by the baby, who, having been neglected for quite long enough, called imperious attention to her own small person. Pulling Donthal's hand from her bare knee, she examined with keenest interest a small pink bump thus exposed.

"Stito bite," she informed them briefly, and scratched vigorously. "Big Dorfy's dot one on her knee, too," she told Donthal with great gravity. "Are you doin' to tiss it, too, like the one you did on her neck?"

Dunstan laughed loud and long, but he could not cover the clear picture of Donthal with his lips against a mos-

quito bite on Dorothy's neck. He wished vaguely for Elizabeth.

"You ought to be more cautious, old man," he said finally, with a last burst of laughter. The baby regarded the laughing men with unbroken seriousness.

Dunstan again held out his arms, and, to his great surprise, she came into them and nestled cozily back against him. His heart pounded strangely under her warm little body. His laughter stopped.

"That's one on me," admitted Donthal. "I think Dorothy was holding her when—when the incident occurred. You know, though, I never saw her go to a stranger before. Isn't she a little dandy?"

Dunstan did not answer. Had he been holding an armful of ignited dynamite his face would have been no more breathlessly expectant. He looked down at her timidly. She was going to sleep. One chubby fist settled tightly around his well-manicured first finger and her chin sank down into her soft white throat. He discovered that he was rocking to and fro, and stopped with a guilty start. The baby's eyes opened accusingly, so he began again.

"Never held a baby before in my life," he whispered to Donthal. "I hope to the Lord I don't drop her."

"You won't," encouraged his friend, smiling at his tight, strained arms. "I think her greatest danger is smothering."

When his wife joined them, she laughed down at Dunstan surprisedly, meeting Donthal with her usual cool graciousness. She was very *chic* and charming in her widely flaring checked gown, and Dunstan, as always, was freshly proud of her.

"What a lovely little dirty thing," she laughed. "Where *did* she come from?" Only an amused admiration lay in her cool, crisp tones. Donthal looked at her curiously as he drew up a chair for her. She gave the child no further notice, and listened inattentively to Dunstan's explanation of meeting his old friends. They had talked but a few minutes, when a woman's voice, calling, caught their attention.

"She's over here. That cruel Mr. Donthal has kidnapped her entirely," and Dunstan saw Dorothy Cameron

mounting the steps, laughing up at the women above her—the same old laugh of hearty good fellowship. She came directly toward Donthal, not recognizing the mustached man who held the baby. She wore some soft sort of a white thing, square in the throat and very simple. Dunstan had never seen Elizabeth in anything the least like it.

"Tom," she said accusingly, "I shall have to be very fierce with you if you don't stop displaying my naughty baby——"

"My naughty baby,"—the words stopped all further action of Dunstan's brain. He rose stupidly, with what he knew was an idiotic grin, tried to hold his burden with one arm, failed, and brought his right arm hastily around her again.

"Mrs. Drew, Mrs. Dunstan," he heard Donthal saying, and finally recovered his voice as Donthal took the waking youngster from him.

"Well, Baird Dunstan of all people to have a mustache!" cried Mrs. Drew in cordial heartiness, shaking his somewhat limp hand warmly. "Your husband and I used to play marbles together," she told Mrs. Dunstan, who replied with a well-bred, "Indeed, how interesting! I think I have heard him speak of you—Cameron, was it not?"

"Yes, Dorothy Cameron. We have another Dorothy Cameron with us now, my young cousin, whom this man is going to carry off."

"Great Scott!" interrupted Dunstan, reddening under the laughing eyes of Donthal, "I thought he was carrying off you."

"Why, I'm seven years a married lady," laughed Mrs. Drew, and knelt down by her baby with a gesture full of proud motherliness. By the simple act she showed herself infinitely distant from the slender, correct woman above her, who watched her with amusement.

"Dorothy," she said a trifle sternly, "you have been naughty again. What *shall* mother do?"

"Don' cry," comforted the baby, throwing both dimpled arms tightly around her neck. "Don' cry. Les' go tell daddy."

"She knows her father will champion her cause," said Donthal, and lifted her to his shoulder again, to carry her home with her mother. "Pretty lucky father, I say."

"He certainly is," mused Dunstan to Elizabeth as they watched the three of them go down the steps. "She's the prettiest thing I ever saw in my life."

"Oh, but so dirty," said Elizabeth, "and we'll be late for the sunset, now."

That evening, while Elizabeth took her accustomed after-dinner nap, Dunstan sat in a deserted porch corner alone, smoking. From some indefinite spot came a woman's lullaby—no time, no words, no rhythm. Nothing but "by-by-my-baby-by-oh-by-oh-by," over and over again to half a dozen little melodies; yet the sweetest lullaby in all the world.

Dunstan felt again the moist clutch of those clinging little fingers and tried to imagine such a lullaby on the lips of Elizabeth. And a strange sense of unutterable defeat bored slowly through his years of satisfaction.



FOR THE LOVE OF MIKE!

By Rutherford Davies

BIG DAN CALLAHAN, stage manager of the Bijou Vaudeville Theatre, was just naturally surly. His viewpoint of life had been warped, and he seemed to hate everything and everybody. He had never been known to go out of his way to do a kind thing, and the bitter, cynical attitude he assumed toward mankind in general and actors in particular had estranged him from human sympathy. As the years went by he grew more and more cynical, more and more aggressive, until even his stage crew, whom he ruled with curses and the fear of his big fist, looked forward to the day that must surely come when Big Dan would "get his."

It all began Christmas week. Billed as the headline attraction was Professor Martelli's Troupe of Trained Animals, and Dan hated animal acts. Their barking, howls and screechings grated on his nerves, and it meant a lot of work after they had gone. So he ordered them to the cellar.

The animals had been billed in as an especial attraction for children, and twice a day they went through their routine of tricks. Romeo, the big chimpanzee, was the star of Martelli's aggregation. He rode a bicycle with marvelous precision, steering it through a maze of bottles set upon the stage; and he skated with the abandon of a youngster just out of school. The chimpanzee was almost human in the range of his accomplishments; and had there been nothing else worth while, Romeo and Mike, the clown dog, would have satisfied the children, who fairly shrieked with delight over the antics of the monkey and the dog with the clown's ruff around his neck.

Mike was just dog, plus intelligence. His gray and white coat was at variance with the lines of his body. His muzzle

didn't seem to properly belong, either. But, though the mixing of breed had placed the bar sinister upon the canine escutcheon, that same mixing had endowed him with a wonderful intelligence. Martelli never whipped Mike as he whipped his other animals. Mike learned his tricks without an effort, and left to his own devices upon the stage, he evolved tricks of his own that made even Martelli laugh.

Mike shared the stellar honors of the show with Romeo, and, like many a human prototype in the profession, the big monkey hated the clown dog with all the ferocity of his simian nature. Laughter and applause directed toward Mike would drive the chimpanzee into a paroxysm of anger. With a shrill scream he would bare his long, white fangs, and in the frenzy of his jealousy would seize upon a piece of scenery with all-fours and vent his feelings on wood and canvas until he threatened to wreck the stage setting. Martelli kept a watchful eye on Romeo, for he knew the hate and cunning that lurked beneath that flat brow. Some day the fear of the whip would be forgotten and there would be vicious reprisal.

The Christmas matinée had been a tremendous success. Romeo had drawn shrieks of laughter from the children and they had beaten their hands in wild applause, but Mike had captured them completely. He had never seemed so funny as he did on that day. He had even dared to invade Romeo's side of the stage and seize the monkey's long tail in his teeth. Romeo was after the dog like a flash, but Mike had learned how to evade those long, powerful fingers. Then the curtain rose and fell a half dozen times. It was Christmas Day and the animals had given a great performance.

"Downstairs!" yelled Martelli. With

joyous yelps from the dogs and shrill chatterings from the monkeys, the animals dashed for the narrow stairway that led to the basement. At the head of the stairs Romeo and Mike were jammed together in the crush, and in that instant of contact simian hate and jealousy burst into wild passion. There was a snarl of rage, a flash of gleaming teeth, and the blood spurted from a jagged wound in Mike's side. The dog screamed in agony and snapped his jaws impotently at the hairy body of his antagonist, then, yelping with pain and biting futilely at the hole in his side, he dashed down the stairs, leaving a splash of blood on every step.

When Martelli discovered the gory trail, he knew instinctively what had happened. Romeo, sitting on a shelf in the dressing room, watched the trainer with furtive, guilty eyes. As Martelli reached for his whip, the huge monkey screamed in defiance and tried to escape the stinging lash. With every blow of the whip Romeo shrieked and struck back, but it was not until Dan Callahan came down and threatened to use the whip on Martelli's own back that the trainer ceased the beating. It wasn't because Dan felt sorry for the monkey, but because the shrill cries could be heard upon the stage.

As Martelli tenderly dressed the gaping wound in the dog's side, Mike turned his head to lick the hand that was ministering to him, but the man's trained eye saw that the wound was beyond his skill. The tears dropped on Martelli's cheeks, for Mike had found a place even in his cruel master's heart, and, besides, clown dogs are hard to train. The man cursed Romeo volubly and shook his fist at the monkey, but Romeo only huddled closer into a corner and chattered in fear.

When the signal came that night for the animals to go upon the stage, Mike staggered out of his cage and lurched toward the stairs. The call of duty was greater than the pain of his hurt. Valiantly he sought to keep pace with the yelping dogs and chattering monkeys that cluttered the stairway, eager for their work. Brutus, the Great Dane,

bowled him over as his great, lithe body bounded through the mass. With a pitiful whimper Mike climbed the first step, then his trembling legs refused to support him, and he crumpled back upon the floor. Trixie, his cage-mate, stopped to nose him curiously, then darted upstairs at the command of Martelli.

At the foot of the stairs Mollie O'Neil, the little red-haired girl who sang rollicking Irish songs, found Mike. She cried when she saw the gaping wound. Tenderly she picked up the shaggy little brute and carried him to his cage. Then she bathed the wound and caressed Mike's head. And knowing that a gentle hand was trying to assuage his pain, the dog turned grateful brown eyes upon her and his red tongue licked the girl's fingers.

Mollie O'Neil didn't give a very good performance that evening. She was thinking of the suffering dog, and deliberately she refused an encore that she might get back to him. Martelli was examining the wound when she got downstairs.

"I'm afraid Mike's done for," he said sadly. "He's sufferin', too, and I sure can't kill him myself."

"Kill him!" gasped the girl. "Surely you won't kill him! He can be saved."

"Maybe he could if I could take care of him proper," answered the trainer. "But a dog that's hurt like that needs rest and care and quiet, just like a human. The best thing is to put him out of his misery."

Then, with a suspicious movement of his hand across his eyes, Martelli went upstairs.

Mollie bent over the dog and stroked his shaggy head.

"You poor little stranger," she whispered sympathetically. "Just because you're hurt they want to kill you." Mike tried to lift his head, but it fell back weakly and he breathed heavily, while his stubby tail moved slowly back and forth, showing that he understood.

When Martelli came down the stairs again his face was grave with concern. Close behind him lumbered Big Dan. Dan ignored the girl bending over the dog. He looked at the wound in Mike's

side, but his face showed no sign of sympathy. With him a dog was a dog, nothing more.

"The best thing to do is to give the mut a crack on the head," he suggested in a businesslike tone. "He'll never know what struck him. I ain't so soft-hearted as you are."

"Wait until I get out of the theatre," begged Martelli, giving the stage manager a greenback. "I can't bear to think of poor Mike dyin' that way. An' don't tell me about it," he added. "It's tough enough as it is."

Dan Callahan laughed cruelly as he tucked the money in his vest pocket. "That's what I call easy money. The mut'll be gone in the mornin'."

Then it was that the caveman found himself confronted by Mollie O'Neil, her blue eyes flashing with indignation. Her mop of red hair seemed like a battle flag waved in defiance.

"You beast," she cried hotly, "to talk like that! If you had one spark of pity!"

"Aw, chop that stuff!" snapped Dan, menacingly. "You ain't got no call to butt in on this."

"If you dare to touch this dog," threatened the girl, "it'll be the sorriest thing you ever did!"

"Why, what'll you do?" mocked Dan sarcastically.

"I'll go out there on the stage and I'll tell the people the kind of things you do back here, that's what I'll do," she cried.

Big Dan laughed contemptuously. She was such a little thing, but every nerve in her body was vibrating with indignation. Dan Callahan liked a fight, he reveled in the clash of great bodies hammering each other into the earth, and he admired a fighter who never flinched at the odds. He had a fighting heart, and so, too, had the girl before him. She had the fighting strain of the O'Neils of Antrim in her blood.

"Haw! haw!" guffawed Dan. "Little Miss Buttinsky tryin' to make a grandstand play. Say," he demanded with sudden change of front, "where do you get off with this line of talk?"

"Well, the dog doesn't belong to me," she contested hotly, "but just the same

you're not going to touch him." She turned pleadingly to Martelli. "Oh, Professor, tell him he mustn't kill the dog!"

But Martelli made an expressive gesture with his hands and shrugged his shoulders. It was hard enough for him anyway, without becoming involved in a controversy. It was Dan Callahan's job now and Martelli didn't want to interfere. Once more he shrugged his shoulders helplessly, then turned and went upstairs.

Very deliberately Dan Callahan picked up a length of cast-iron pipe, mentally calculated its weight by a toss or two of his hand, and looked meaningly at the helpless dog.

"I'll show you who runs things around here," he announced with determination. Then, as he saw the look of horror in the girl's eyes, he relaxed a little.

"Sure, the mut'll never know what happened to him," he said with a mollifying grin.

As he took a step forward, the girl turned like a flash and seized the dog in her arms. She held him close to her breast and defiantly faced the stage manager.

"You'll have to hit me first!" she cried. "And you won't dare to do that, you big coward!"

Mollie O'Neil never flinched. She would have faced ten such brutes as Dan Callahan and yielded not an inch. Then suddenly Dan Callahan felt a wave of indecision sweep over him. His tense grip on the pipe relaxed.

"Well, for the love of Mike!" he said slowly, with a touch of admiration in his voice. "I'm licked, and for the first time in me life." With a quick movement he tossed the pipe into a corner. "Oh, it don't make no difference," he laughed insinuatingly. "I can git him some other time."

But Mollie O'Neil had won the first tilt. She resolved to make her victory decisive. Intuition outlined a plan of attack.

"It's Christmas, Mr. Callahan," she said plaintively. "Won't you let me have Mike for a Christmas present?"

Something stirred in the flinty heart

of Dan Callahan. The girl had penetrated his hard exterior and touched upon hidden strings long since atrophied. The magic of her soft blue Irish eyes and the appeal in her voice did the rest. Abruptly he turned toward the stairs.

"Aw, I don't fight wimmen," he growled.

But Mollie O'Neil darted forward and blocked his way. "Say you'll let me have him," she begged softly. "It's Christmas, you know."

"All right!" he answered roughly, "ye can have him, but it's the first Christmas present I've ever made to anybody in me life."

He didn't wait for Mollie's thanks, but went back on the stage and yelled at the crew to hurry their work under penalty of having their faces disfigured forthwith.

But Mollie O'Neil put little faith in Dan Callahan and his promises. When she left the theatre that night Mike, carefully wrapped in an old skirt, was in her arms. She made a bed for him in a corner of her room, and bathed and dressed the ragged wound where the teeth of the big primate had left their ugly mark.

The next day Dan Callahan questioned her, and frankly she told him that Mike was safe in her own room.

"I said you could have him for a present, didn't I?" demanded Dan indignantly. "An' I never go back on my word. What I say I'll do, I'll do. My word's as good as a government bond."

"I believe you," said the girl with sudden earnestness. "I'm sorry I didn't trust you, but you see, Mr. Callahan, I didn't know you as well as I do now. Won't you forgive me?"

She put out her dainty white hand, and Dan felt positively foolish. The blood rushed to his face and he shifted his great weight from one foot to the other.

"You'll shake hands, won't you?" urged the girl with a smile. "Just to show there's no hard feeling."

Awkwardly Dan put out his own grimy hand and the girl's white fingers were completely enveloped in it. That instant began the undermining of Big

Dan Callahan. He felt as Samson must have felt when Delilah plied the shears upon his locks. His strength was going simply because a slip of an Irish girl, with a great mop of tousled red hair and laughing blue eyes, had defied him, flouted him and cajoled him by turn, which is the way of womankind the world over.

He realized that she played with him, yet he was helpless. And he rejoiced in his helplessness. It was a new experience to him. Whenever he had been pitted against big men in smashing dock fights, where brawn and muscle and a stout fighting heart counted, he had never counted the odds. His fighting slogan was: "The bigger they are the harder they fall!" His slogan came to mind, and he smiled grimly.

"I'm in for a hell of a bump!" he laughed softly. "An' I don't care when it comes."

The first visible evidence of his downfall came when he visited the barber shop two days ahead of scheduled time. Saturday was his night at Tony's, and a close shave would last him through the week. Now he plunged to the extent of a haircut, a shave and a shine.

"An' cut out that smelly stuff you've been puttin' on my hair," he ordered testily. "I don't want no more of that dope."

Then came a clean collar and a bright red tie. Dan Callahan was dolling up for the first time in his life, and all because of a girl who earned her living as a vaudeville singer.

In three days it would be over. She would go on her way and pass out of his life. But why should it be over, he argued fiercely. He looked critically at himself in the dressing-room mirror. It gave back the reflection of a man of forty, with a weatherbeaten face, fearless gray eyes set far apart, a nose that betokened aggressiveness, though many fights in the past may have helped in moulding it to its present shape, a generous mouth and a strong chin. Yet Dan, prejudiced as he might be, could not conscientiously hope to win a prize in a beauty show. Still, he contended, there were worse-looking men than he, and

vigorously he announced that fact to his image in the mirror.

"Nobody's hangin' any medals on me for looks," he grinned, "but I ain't such a rough-neck, either, that I can't be tamed. That kid sure has me goin', but I've got to fergit her quick."

But Mollie O'Neil herself completely upset his plans. As he stood at the switchboard that night, he became conscious of the fact that she was at his side. Then he felt her hand resting on his brawny forearm. He heard her ask if she might have a word, just a moment of his time.

Obediently he followed her into the property room. "I won't detain you long, Mr. Callahan," she smiled.

"Aw, chop that 'Mister' gag," he growled good-naturedly. "Call me 'Dan.'"

"Well, then—Dan," she said coyly. It was delightful, thought the man, the way she lingered on his name. And then, too, she began to toy with the lapel of his coat. Dan felt as if he were soaring through space on a cloud.

"I'm going on the eleven-forty to-night," she went on. "And I want you to do me a favor. Will you—Dan?"

She still clung tenaciously to the lapel, then she tilted her head on one side. At that instant Dan Callahan would have promised her the moon had she demanded it. He was as clay in the hands of the potter.

"Anything in the world for you!" he announced with decision. "Shoot it!"

"Well, then," she said softly, "will you promise to take care of Mike for me?" Dan gasped. "Just as if I were there at your side to see you do it," she purred insinuatingly. "I want you to keep him for me until I come back."

Recklessly he had cast the die, and recklessly he promised. "I'll give that mut me own downy couch, and I'll feed him porterhouse steak and strawberries and cream, and anything else he wants, if you ask it."

"If you do," she cried joyously, "I'll give you——"

"What'll ye give?" demanded Dan craftily.

"I'll give you a great big hug and a—

kiss!" she replied with reckless abandon.

"You're on!" snapped Dan. "Shake on it." Then, as he held her hand, he babbled on. "Mike shall sleep in a bed of roses and have hummin' birds for breakfast. Astor's pet horse won't have better treatment than that mut'll get from yours truly. Bring him to me."

Dan fell with a fearful crash, for the bigger they are, the harder they fall. All the foolish things that lovers do, he did. He began his servitude by carrying her grip to the train. He checked her trunk with a great show of authority, and the two dollars that Martelli had given him to insure the demise of Mike were expended on a box of candy for Mollie.

Dan Callahan had come upon his Waterloo, as had many a good man before him.

As the train pulled out he called to the girl, "Believe me, I'm goin' to earn my pay."

The stage crew were the first to notice the change in Dan. He gave orders a little more quietly. The harshness disappeared from his voice. And he seldom swore with those fervid oaths that had come to be second nature to him in days gone by, when he had trod the deck of a tramp steamer as first mate. Love's magic was upon him, and the man whose way through life had been marked with great splashes of crimson was being born anew. The memory of a woman's smile, the soft pressure of a tiny hand, were regenerating Dan Callahan. Even the lines in his face seemed to soften, for the mind is reflected externally, and Dan's thoughts had turned to sweeter, gentler things.

Whenever an envelope of a distinctive shade of blue, bearing a Western postmark, arrived at the theatre, the boys knew they could ask favors and be sure of having them granted. They winked slyly at each other.

"He's got it bad," they grinned. "He's getting soft in the bean."

Dan Callahan confided to no man this wonderful thing that had come into his life. It was too sacred for profane or incredulous ears. But it overflowed his heart and the knowledge of it was too

much to hide away completely. He had to tell of it, and Mike, loving, trusting Mike, was chosen to be the recipient of Dan's confidences, his hopes and his fears. And Mike understood, as only dogs can understand. He understood and approved.

Dan's starved heart was learning for the first time the grip of a mysterious, unsatisfied longing. His nights were filled with dreams of Mollie O'Neil, and to the dog Dan would declare that Mollie O'Neil was the greatest little woman that ever lived.

Mike was a trick dog, but Mollie O'Neil received the surprise of her life when she received a letter signed "Mike." It was evident that Mike's early education had been neglected, for he wrote in the fashion of one who might have spent his days on the levees and on tramp steamers, or perhaps even in handling heavy scenery. Mike's first letter, misspelled and uncertain of chi-rography, reached the girl in Tulsa. Mollie laughed for an hour after reading it. Then she tucked it away very carefully, for Mike's letters promised to become very precious.

"DEAR MISS O'NEIL (began Mike, quite formally),

"I have got well. My friend, Mr. Dan Callahan, got a dog doctor for me, and I am O.K. now. Mr. Callahan is a much better man now. He used to be very rough, but since he cut out the booze he ain't so rough. He says he is working for good pay. He says I am a lucky dog. What do you think? Please answer care Mr. D. Callahan, Bijou Theatre.

"Lovingly,

"MIKE."

"P. S. Mr. Callahan says when do you play a return date here he is very anshus."

Very soberly Mollie O'Neil wrote in reply:

"DEAR MIKE:

"Your welcome letter received. I am sure that Mr. Callahan is a fine man. I thought so the first time I met him, even if he was a little rough. I think he is a big diamond that needs polishing. Of

course, you are not to show this letter to him, for men are vain and silly. All he thinks of is getting his pay for taking care of you. I am very anxious to see you. Kind regards to Mr. D. Callahan.

"Lovingly,

"MOLLIE."

Whenever a letter addressed to "Mike O'Neil, care Mr. D. Callahan," reached the theatre, Dan would call Mike to him. Then, in the privacy of one of the dressing rooms that he used as an office, he would read Mike's letter aloud, a process that was accompanied by many gurgles of delight and exclamations of suppressed joy; in fact, it was read with a display of interest that was not at all compatible with the fact that the letter was addressed to Mike O'Neil and not to Mr. D. Callahan. For a mere private secretary, Mr. D. Callahan took a most unusual interest in his principal's letters.

"Listen, you mut!" Dan would growl in simulated anger, "that lady friend of yours on the Lyric Circuit has been writin' you agin. If you think I am a-goin' to act as private secretary for you much longer, you gotta nuther guess comin'. See!"

Mike would blink solemnly at Dan and edge an inch or so closer, pounding out a steady tattoo with his stubby tail. "Here's what she says, Mike," Dan would chuckle. "I'll stop up my ears so I can't hear." Then he would read Mollie's letter.

"Oh, you pie-eyed mut!" he would shout at the conclusion of the reading, "don't I wish I wuz you!" He would crush Mike to him and rough up the hair on the dog's neck. "Gee, but she's some gal. We're the lucky ginks!"

After that Dan Callahan would gaze into space and weave wonderful dreams, while a happy, contented smile played around the corners of his mouth.

One fine day Mike received a special delivery letter. D. Callahan, private secretary, took it at once to the seclusion of his dressing-room office, perched Mike upon a chair in front of him, and tore the letter open.

"DEAR MIKE (it read),
 "I am booked to play the Bijou next month. Thought you'd like to know. How is Mr. Callahan? Give him my regards. MOLLIE."

"P. S. Think this will be my last season on the road, as I have saved up enough to buy myself a home."

Private Secretary Callahan's response was very prompt. He never allowed Mike's correspondence to lag.

"DEAR MOLLIE (heretofore it had been 'Miss O'Neil,' but Private Secretary Callahan said he'd take a chance on being called down),

"My friend, Mr. D. Callahan, has saved up his money, too. He has bought a house and fixed it all up. Says some day he might get foolish enough to git married. Mr. Callahan and me picked out everything. Mr. Callahan says a house ain't no good without a kitchen. He's got runnin' water in it and a bathroom. Mr. Callahan says he is goin' to be permoted to be house manager. He says give my regards to Miss O'Neil.

"Yours lovingly,
 "MIKE."

"P. S. Mr. Callahan wraps all my letters from you with a piece of blue ribbon and keeps them next his hart. I think he's goin' nutty."

"MIKE."

But before Mollie O'Neil again entered the Ohio Valley to play her return date at the Bijou, tragedy swept everything before it. The great dams burst from the pressure of the impounded waters, increased a hundred-fold by torrential rains and melting snow, and death and destruction rode down the valley on the crest of the surcharged rivers. Dan Callahan's little house was in the path of the onswEEPing flood. Inch by inch the waters rose above the foundations, and then to the second story. And slowly the foundations were yielding and the house wavering.

Dan Callahan was away. He had gone that morning to a town twenty miles distant to help put on a heavy show. It was one of the few times that

Dan had separated from Mike. He had left the dog in the house with food and water for the day, and now danger threatened with the sweep of the yellow waters that churned past the house.

When Dan Callahan reached the river bank, his house was almost submerged. In a gable window was Mike, alternately whining with fear and barking impotently.

Now and then a tree would crash against the frame dwelling and the building would tremble from the force of the impact. Chicken coops, beds, and débris of every kind swirled down the river. The flood was exacting its toll, but Dan Callahan never hesitated.

He calmly gauged the force of the flood, then turned to one of the stage crew who had accompanied him.

"Here's a bunch of letters, Sam. If I don't get back, send them to Miss Mollie O'Neil at this address." He pointed to an address in the corner of the topmost envelope. "If anything happens, tell her I was tryin' to earn my pay. She'll understand."

A half mile upstream Dan plunged into the water. He had calculated that the force of the flood would carry him that distance before he could make a point directly north of his little house. Warily he dodged floating trees and household furniture that swept down upon him, and with every stroke of his powerful arms he drew nearer to the house upon which he had lavished his great hopes. Fifty yards from it he called to the dog, and Mike answered with a bark of joy. Then Dan was swept close to the sill of the window and he seized upon it. Slowly he lifted himself into the house, and Mike leaped upon him in frenzied greeting. Dan pressed the shaggy animal to his wet breast.

"I wouldn't leave you, old pal," he said huskily. "If we go, we'll go together."

For an hour he rested, regaining his strength. With cool, calm eyes, he watched the muddy waters rush past the house. A giant oak that had been uprooted crashed into the north end of the building and made it rock dangerously.

Then, even as it trembled from the impact, the span of a massive wooden bridge that had crossed the river at Dayton, ten miles to the north, came hurtling upon the frame structure, and Dan's little house fairly tilted. The water was flowing over the sill by this time, and a foot of water covered the attic floor.

Dan strapped the dog to his shoulders, and Mike clung tenaciously to his master. "Hang on tight, pal, and we'll make it," he cried cheerily.

To regain the shore was a battle worthy of Dan Callahan's mighty brawn. He fought those swirling, engulfing waters as he had fought everything else in life, with all the strength of his arms and body, backed by his great fighting heart that never knew defeat. And though a stray timber, carried along at express speed, crashed into his head and laid it open for six inches, he fought doggedly on, knowing that Mike was clinging to him like a leech. Mike's cold nose was snuggled close under Dan's ear and a tremulous little whimper told of the dog's fears.

They pulled Dan ashore, panting and weak, and his first thought was of Mike.

"He's all right?" he questioned. "I wouldn't have him hurt for a million dollars."

Mollie heard all about it when she reached the city a month later. Dan was waiting for her and Mike cavorted around, threatening to break himself in

two in his attempts to attract attention.

"You know," said Dan, "my word's as good as a government bond, and I promised to turn Mike over to you in good shape. Here he is, right as a trivet and sound in wind and limb!" Then he grew very red in the face and stammered, "I wanted to earn my pay, you know."

Mollie O'Neil paid instant, but at the same time demonstrated that she was a very poor business woman; for, whereas, as party of the first part, she had contracted to pay with one kiss, she heaped payment upon Dan Callahan such as he had never dreamed of. Not one hug did she give him, but a dozen, and the "great big kiss"—Well, Dan was a regular Shylock in exacting usurious interest as well. The caveman was gone, and in his place was a big man with a battered head, who was wondrously happy.

Then he told her what his dream had been and begged for his answer. And Mollie whispered, "Yes, Dan," very softly.

Dan Callahan was overcome with the sense of his great happiness. Very solemnly he took her in his arms, and, in awed voice, said, "Well, for the love of Mike!"

"Yes," she echoed, looking meaningfully at the dog, who watched them with big brown eyes, "for the love of Mike!"

THE WITNESS IN THE CASE

By Forrest Halsey

SHE mounted through the dim and dirty gaslight and the smells of cooking tenement dinners. The carpet had a sodden feel through her thin-soled slippers. She held her furs tightly about her for fear of the stained walls. At each recurring landing the stairs reached higher into the murk; the rail yellow and naked against the dark well as the bones of a skeleton against a showman's black calico curtain. Under its soft linen and lace her flesh crawled.

It was to this that the coming crisis had forced her, to this abode of the sordid and horrible. The feel of her check book in the satin pocket of her furs reassured her; it was her excuse and her salvation. How lucky that the detectives had found where the girl had hidden herself—found her in time. Without his main witness her husband's case would crumble into nothing but the jagged fragments that common rumor hurled at her and then safety, peace, her place in her world, would again close around her.

So to places like this the servants that her kind kept about them came. These were the abodes from which the silent automatons who served society's comfort sprang. Again her delicate flesh shivered against its linen and fine lace. Who could tell what horrors of disease might be brought from these kennels to wide-spaced drawing-rooms and luxurious boudoirs? She would be very careful with her maids after this; would take none that were out of employment; would demand that they never leave her servants' quarters.

Mrs. Randolph Beverly, mounting the tenement stairs and shivering with delicate disdain, might have indulged herself with another tremor had she ever seen the holes and crannies under her many roofs into which her housekeepers stowed and stuffed the servants of her various households. But Mrs. Randolph Beverly was not given to bothering about unimportant details. Had she done so she might not now have been under the necessity of mounting flight after flight of a noisome tenement stairway in pursuit of an unimportant detail, suddenly become of ghastly importance—her late maid, now her husband's chief witness.

A heavy, coarse-bosomed tenement mother opened a door on one of the landings and looked down the hall. The woman's eyes hardened at the sight of the tall figure in its quiet colors, with the light touching to sleekness the edges of the dark, rich furs. Those appraising eyes studied the fine white face, the delicately formed and painted lips; and the voluptuous eyes in their setting of faint blue shadows and sweeping lashes; caught a moment at the twinkle of small jewels in the long earrings; then the whole lined and sogging face filled with a stony disgust which had in it something which said that the expression was a frequent one with a tenement mother when looking at passing women in that hall. The woman banged and locked her door.

Again Mrs. Randolph Beverly shuddered. She should have dressed differently had she known that the creature she was seeking lived in such a place as this. That disgusting woman just now,

what might she not be planning—robbery, possibly?

But Mrs. Randolph Beverly need have given herself no uneasiness. The tenement mother had no intention of robbing her. The locked and hostile door indicated that the tenement mother had more fear of theft than Mrs. Beverly. How is a hard-working, much-fearing mother of pretty young girls to know that jewels and voluptuous eyes set in blue shadows, and furs that are sleek in the dim gas do not of necessity imply one who seeks for the light of innocence under the bushel of poverty.

"This is the number," said Mrs. Randolph Beverly, looking from a door handle to a crumpled slip of paper in her hand. "The fool, to force me to find her!" She referred to the frightened youth who was now fleeing fast and far from the lightning forked tempest of scandal which was sweeping toward Mrs. Beverly. His youth had first attracted and then bored her. It would be a ghastly joke to come to ruin for a man who bored one. But why need one come to ruin while in possession of the magic wand of the check book, which at a single touch can change an avenging fury into a gossamer sprite that, vanishing into thin air, leaves the man who has summoned it to pay for the breakage his black magic has caused?

"I really think it will not be so very expensive, after all," said Mrs. Randolph Beverly, as she saw the broken transom light up.

"Come in," said the girl who opened the door. "I was expecting you."

Mrs. Beverly entered a single room, cut in two by a frame partition on which was stretched lurid wall paper on a canvas backing. A couch with a crumpled coverlid stood under the window. The compartment was scarcely more than the couch's length. A chair, a washstand and a very small trunk almost filled the place. On the wall was a picture cut from a magazine. It was a reproduction of a portrait of Mrs. Randolph Beverly, done by a painter of society, whose furor had filled his studio and engagement book some years back. Fingering her famous

pearls, her equally famous and well-rendered eyes touched with cool laughter, the high-bred woman in the picture seemed to be laughing at the corner of the gas stove, which was directly in her line of vision through the opening in the partition dividing the room. The artist had caught with real cleverness his sitter's look of amused disdain and her repose of breeding. The art of the painter had been an ephemeral one; but excellently suited to depicting women who existed, like his art, only for the day.

"You expected me?" Mrs. Beverly's manner and the arch of her slender brows implied cool surprise. After all the girl had only frightened her when she disappeared. Now, seeing her very much as she had always been, a colorless semi-necessary sort of thing, Mrs. Randolph Beverly was tempted by that surge of anger which a mistress feels with a servant whose sudden impertinence affronts her. Certainly the chief staff of her husband's attack would break easily in his wife's capable hands.

"Yes," said the girl in the quiet, pretty voice that Mrs. Beverly had liked—as she would have liked some particular bit of fineness in one of her horses—"I knew that was your detective—the man who came to my door to-day. I have been expecting you. I thought you would come yourself. But if you had sent for me I was ready." She pointed to the hat and gloves on the little table. "Will you sit down? Our talk will be a long one, madam."

Again Mrs. Beverly's brows lifted their cool surprise.

"What I have to say can be said very quickly," said the mistress to her former servant.

"But what I have to say cannot."

The woman's shock of surprise at the sudden firmness of the girl's voice was heightened by the echo of something familiar in its steely undertone. Then surprise gave place to amusement as she realized that the tone was a copy of her own. The woman of the world could afford amusement at this piece of unconscious flattery and at the further tribute of the tremble in the girl's slender

hands as they rested on the back of the proffered chair.

Mrs. Randolph Beverly, woman of the great world, born to the power of money and married to much more, beautiful in spite of her forty years, equipped with every weapon and charm that vast wealth could give her, surely she was adequate to handle the situation which contained now only herself and her husband's chief witness? She was glad that the fool who bored her had run away. She could handle this anæmic girl without difficulty.

"Of course not," Mrs. Beverly smiled charmingly and sitting down on the couch opened her long fur coat. The light rippled down the edges of the scarlet satin lining; it multiplied, heightened and spat color from the tiny jewels in her long earrings. The shadow of her hat cut her face in two; above, a mask that hid her eyes, below, the shrill scarlet of her smiling lips showed clearly in the white flesh of the delicately formed lower half of her face.

"You know exactly why I am here." The narrow check book was in the white-gloved fingers. "If you testify in this case you may get a few hundred dollars. But you never again can get a position. The papers will be sealed, of course, but that you appeared against me will be known to the women who would employ you—these things are always known, no matter what Mr. Beverly's lawyers may have told you.

"On the other hand, if you go away, I will give you several thousand dollars to take with you. With that money you can educate yourself. If you are ambitious you can study something—trained nursing, perhaps. You would make an excellent trained nurse, Barton. A good trained nurse, such as I am sure you could be, commands a good salary. Do you wish all your life to remain a servant?"

She paused and smiled with kindly persuasion.

The girl did not answer with her lips, but the knuckles of the hands grasping the chair-back showed their bones clearly through the stretched flesh.

"I do not blame you for what you

have done." The check book was opened with its suggestion of seductive green money. "How could I blame a poor ignorant girl for being frightened by lawyers and detectives? But you have me to protect you now. In addition to the money I shall give you," she was writing with the fountain pen she had brought with her the date, the girl's name, "in addition, I shall make your future my special care."

"And what of my past!"

The woman looked up. The icy fury of the voice was repeated in the eyes. An instinct to meet the sudden attack on her feet brought the woman of the world to an upright position.

"Why, Barton—I fail to understand you." Then, as she thought that she did understand, she added sweetly and kindly: "My poor girl, if you have made a mistake, if there is anything in your past that should not be there, why——"

"There is this in my past," the girl leaned across the chair until her pale face was close to the woman's powdered one, "*this*—that I am your daughter. I was raised on a lonely mountain farm in New England by a woman named Garrison."

The check book fell to the floor.

"You are plainly insane," said the woman in a bored voice.

"Oh, do not fear, madam, that I shall claim relationship with you after you have left this room. You are too clever to have left a legal track that would lead from you to me—far too clever, as the woman you gave me to discovered long ago. She came to love me and to wish for me the education, the chance to be more than a servant, that you have just so kindly proffered. She discovered her mistake. But for all that there are some things which tie you and me, mistress and servant, mother and daughter, fast to each other."

She glanced down at her bony knuckles.

"I cannot offer in evidence my hands. Work has driven them out of all resemblance to your justly famous ones. You did not give me your beauty of face, madam—and for that I thank you. But

look—look at that picture of yourself as you were ten years ago and then look at me."

She tore her waist open and thrust it from her shoulders. Her bust and neck were bare and beautiful in the dim light, beautiful with the same slender dryad beauty that the artist had faithfully copied. Everyone is familiar with the remark of the great English artist about a certain famous beauty's back: that there was no duplicate of it in the world. He had said the same of Mrs. Randolph Beverly's neck and shoulders. But the duplicate of them existed and shone in all their bare white loveliness in the cluttered little tenement room.

The kindly half mask which the light had thrown on Mrs. Randolph Beverly's face concealed her eyes, but the scarlet lips had lost their smile. Perfectly still, draped in her sweeping furs, she waited while the girl rebuttoned her dress, then:

"It is quite true," said Mrs. Randolph Beverly. Perhaps if her eyes had been visible they would have shown how quickly she realized the use she could make of her discovery; the added protection it meant to her.

"Alice!"

The girl struck the back of the chair with a hardened palm. "Stop! Before you say another word, before you use again the first name of your late maid—I wonder that you remembered it, madam—before you say another word, let me tell you that it is my intention to ruin you utterly. I have waited for this, planned for it, schemed for it, to get myself into your house and ruin you; you, who unwillingly gave me life, and then left me to the mercy of drunkards, making me pay in ignorance and poverty and wretchedness unspeakable for the hours of your past pleasure.

"Do you look for pity from me? You, who came here with your offers of money *now*—with your talk of ambition and a place above the servant class *now*. You, who would not part with a single dollar of all your millions that I might be able to battle with the world on any terms but its own! You feared that your money might tie us together and

make less secure the position of which you are so proud. Madam, your hate of me has come back to you. I give it back to you a thousand times over.

"Now you shall feel what it is to be a shamed and mocked thing—as I have done. People shall laugh at you as they laughed at me. You shall pay as I have paid—over and over. *Now*, you shall feel what I have meant you to feel ever since years ago I planned and schemed to get into your service. I knew from what you had done to me, from what that drunken woman who hid me for you told me of you—what you were and would be when at last I should find you. I have found you. And now I strip you of your place in the world as you stripped me—before I was even born! Go, feel what I've felt—go——" She pointed to the door.

"It is quite natural that you should feel as you do toward me," said the woman. "I admit all you say. But still the fact remains that I am your mother."

"You are nothing but the woman who unwillingly gave me birth!" said the girl, with a curl of her thin lips. Her face in its unrestrained fury and hate was that of the common class which has never been taught to hide its emotions. The woman's breeding showed the higher by the contrast of its cool repose.

"Pardon my appeal," Mrs. Randolph Beverly looked down at the check book and touched it with the tip of her slipper, "I am sure you are quite right in thinking as you do of me. Still, my dear, why wreck your own life for the satisfaction of wrecking mine? I admit that I have been thoughtless, careless; and I cannot forgive the lawyers who did not see to you better. You could hardly expect me to take you into my house, you know."

"No, I attended to that," said the girl. Her voice had now a hard quality that belonged to the class in which she made her living.

"Still, there are many things that I can do—now that matters have been made clear to me. Surely, my child, money means more to you than this absurd idea of revenge. If you have no particular ambition there may be some man for whom you care——"

"There is," said the girl with an equal coolness. "He's a truckman, or was till he lost his job. You see that through living with your kind I can copy your speech, but your daughter can't hope to marry above her class, madam. And," a little weariness dragged its gray color into her voice and softened the hardness, "and she can't even hope to marry him—because neither of us has work. You are mistaken about my taking money from your husband, madam—so you see——"

"Then," cried the woman with an eager gesture.

"He's down and out—and I am nearly so, but before we would get married on your blackmail we'd both of us die—and before I'd do what you would do if you loved a man—or wanted one—I'd kill myself. That's the difference between me and you, madam. Perhaps it's because I am what I am that I hate what you are."

The flame of her pitiful virginity, all the dowry that her God had given her to battle for, shone in her face, transforming it into beauty as with the light of a vestal fire.

"So," said the girl, drearily, "there's no marrying for me—and nothing for me except," and her voice took the hardness of bronze, "just to pay you what I owe you—and get square with you forever. Go away. That wall will hear you and pity you before I will. I've got you there," the fingers of her outstretched hand in closing seemed to crush the other woman's heart in a grip of fear, "and there I'll keep you till I'm done with you. Now go." She opened the door.

Mrs. Randolph Beverly's breeding rose above her fears. And though the future which stretched before her was as dark and repellent as the tenement stairway, as full of hidden horror and danger, she closed the furs at her throat and turned coolly to go into it.

"Just a minute," said the girl. "Here is your check book."

"Thank you," said the woman.

But before she crossed the threshold she was dragged back and the door locked.

"Wait," commanded the girl, "I don't

want him to see you. I never could make him understand. I haven't told him who you are. He just knows what I am——"

The woman heard springing steps come down the hall, the hearty whack of a fist on the door. "Say, Ally," called a big young voice, "come out quick, I got something to tell you."

"I can't, Billy," the girl called with a warning look at the woman beside her. "I ain't dressed. Go away and come back in half an hour."

"It won't keep half an hour." There was a chuckle through the panel. "It won't keep a minute. Say, Ally, I didn't tell you because I didn't want you to worry in case I was turned down, but I've been taking the exams for the police. And say—say, I got appointed—I'm on the force—I'm a sure-for-fair cop. We got to go up among the goats, but say—I'm a cop."

"Go away, Billy, and come back in half an hour," whispered the girl.

"And meanwhile I'll see Father Marvin," loudly whispered the man.

They heard the stairs shaking under the joyous thumps of his bounding youth.

The girl hid her face in the crook of her arm and leaning against the door stood silent for a moment. Then she dropped her arm, unlocked the door and opened it.

"Go," she said hurriedly. "You need not be afraid. When the time comes for me to sign those affidavits I won't do it. But not for you, mind, but because—because—well, after all, it may be for your sake. If you never had borne me I'd never have met Billy. Go away. Don't speak to me, it's God I want to talk to."

As she passed her door the tenement mother opened it and looked Mrs. Randolph Beverly over.

"It's a wonder that one of your kind dares show her face in a decent house," said the tenement mother.

Mrs. Randolph Beverly descended the stairs. Her breeding, of course, precluded even the thought of an answer to the insult.

THE INDISCREET LITTLE THING

By Isabel Woodman Waitt

"THEY'D no right to call this old place an 'Inn,' when it's nothing but an 'Out,'" pouted little Mrs. Caxton. "Look at this huge veranda full of empty chairs to keep me company all this lovely afternoon. Everybody's out all the time. Why, there isn't a soul——"

"I know—I know; it is stupid for you, Molly," interrupted her young husband, who was already at the bottom of the steps. "The hotel isn't much, but it's the best I could do here. If I were you I could find plenty to do—shop, or write letters or, why don't you go to the movies?"

"They don't change the program until to-morrow. I've seen this one."

"Well, you'll have to amuse yourself somehow, and not fuss, or I shan't take you away with me again. Rely on your-

self a little, like a good girl, and don't worry me," he said somewhat petulantly as he started briskly down the street. "So long!"

At the corner Molly saw him wave as he vanished from sight. Then she sat herself down with a disconsolate sigh to do nothing at all. Nothing at all except to dream of the things she would do if she could. It was warm and balmy and easy to dream.

Someone stalked up the steps. It was probably another traveling salesman. The Inn abounded with them. Molly did not turn her head.

"Having a good time out there?" sang out a cheery voice.

Molly looked up. Who could be having a good time in such a spot, she wondered. A man was smiling quizzically at her, and it *was* a traveling salesman.

She knew because she had come upon her husband chatting with him several times in the lobby, or emerging from the smoking-room. He had rather a good thing, in his line. Tom said so.

"Were you speaking to me?" stammered the girl. "If you were, let me ask you if you consider wearing out piazza chairs for five whole weeks all by yourself perfectly hilarious?"

The man approached and poised himself artistically on the railing. He was good to look upon; young, wholesome, clean-cut, and faultlessly groomed.

Watching him, Molly couldn't help wishing Tom were as painstaking with his own busy person. Tom was positively immoral about shines and shoestrings.

"You're lonesome, Mrs. Caxton. And it's a shame!"

Molly felt the color come into her face. She had just been pitying herself dreadfully. It was nice to have some one else pity her.

"I've got it," went on the man, after pondering a moment, "you get that husband of yours, and you and he and I will drive over to Newbridge. I've got to 'tend to a little deal——"

"But my husband isn't here! Didn't you meet him? He just left as you came in."

"What a pity!" exclaimed the man.

"And he may not get back to dinner, either."

Molly pouted and looked as forlorn as she could. She knew it was becoming.

"I wonder—I wonder—do you suppose"—he scanned her face dubiously—"do you suppose his royal highness would object so very much if you should go for a little ride with me? It would help to while away some of these long, blue, tedious hours. Oh, I *know* they are!"

A grateful light crept into Molly's blue eyes at such a sympathetic understanding. Suddenly she sat erect. Hadn't Tom chided her for not amusing herself? Here was her chance. Go? Of course she would go. What a silly little thing she was to hesitate!

"All right then," he agreed. "I'll meet you in ten minutes in front of the post office. It might be better not to start

from here, you know." And away he went before she could take time to change her mind.

Molly Caxton never went anywhere without giving a full account of herself. She ought to leave some sort of word for Tom in case she were late—motor cars were always acting up! Snatching a pencil and pad, she started to write:

"DEAR TOM:

"I have gone on a little joy ride with that nice traveling salesman."

Somehow, it didn't sound just right, so she tore it up and scribbled instead:

"DEAR TOM:

"I am amusing myself. May not be back to dinner. Don't wait for

"Your old nuisance,

"MOLLY."

He was waiting for her at the post office. As she clambered into the seat beside him, she did wish she could remember his name; but, except that it was an unusual one, nothing came to her.

On the rear seat was a box which contained, in all probability, as this was a business trip, the 'rather good thing' Tom had said he sold. Joltingly she asked him what it was, but he evidently didn't hear her, as he paid no attention to anything but the wheel.

Away they whizzed at a terrific rate, past blurry houses and racing trees. Neither tried to talk, and Molly, who detested to ride more than twenty miles an hour, began to wish she hadn't come. Besides, she caught something in her eye.

Once outside the town, the automobile slowed down.

"Well, how's that?" gleefully demanded the commercial traveler, glancing at the tense little figure beside him.

"It's—it's going some—a little too some for me," gasped Molly. "You can't see the countryside, when you go like that—and it's all so beautiful I hate to miss any of it. Is it so very far to Newbridge that we have to go fast in order to get back by dinner time?"

"Um—hum—well, we'll go as slowly

as you like, little lady. Is this speed more to your liking?"

Molly laughed. She did wish she could remember that name of his. "It's splendid, thank you, Mr.—Mr. Man. You may spurt her up if necessary. I'm not really very much afraid after I get used to a new *chauffeur*."

"You wouldn't be afraid of me?" he scoffed.

"You *know* I meant the pace we were going," she replied.

"Oh, I see—the pace!" The man smiled.

It was a wonderful ride, through green valleys, along the side of a sinuous little river, crossed and recrossed with picturesque bridges. They conversed little, and when they did speak it was little commonplaces about the scenery, the weather, or the freaks at the Inn. The afternoon vanished ere Molly realized it was passing. A queer little ache in her back made her cognizant of the fact that she had been sitting a long time.

"Are we nearly there—at New-bridge?" she asked. "And will we get back in time for dinner?"

The man pulled out his watch. Then he whistled.

"I'm afraid I'm on the wrong road. We should have been there half an hour ago, at least. I'll bet we've taken the Byfield turn."

He stopped the motor and looked at her.

"That's just what we've done. Well, it can't be helped. We can't get to New-bridge to-night. And I'm starved. I tell you what we'll do, we'll keep right on the way we're going. There used to be a small hotel about two miles from here, and we'll get a bite before we turn back."

"But your business deal—and we'll be late, won't we?" faltered the girl. "Well, it won't matter much, because I told him——"

"Told whom?" demanded the salesman sharply.

"Why, my husband—in the note I left for him. I always leave word where I'm going."

"Well, I'll be—did you say with *me*?"

She shook her head.

"I think we'd better turn right round now," said Molly.

"With me starving and food within reach—be a sport and see it through! You can explain if you're a trifle late."

Before she could demur further a unique and attractive roadhouse loomed into view. It was a relief to rest her back, and have a chance to arrange her blowzy, touseled hair.

The house was quite a sumptuous affair for such an out-of-the-way place, thought Molly, as she and her companion were escorted to a little room with just one table, already laid for two.

"Got everything just as you ordered it, Mistah Robinson," beamed the head waiter. "Couldn't give you the blue room, 'cause it was taken before you-all telepho——"

He ceased abruptly and backed out of the door. Without looking up, the girl felt the man's threatening look. And his name wasn't Robinson—it was *Boxall*—she remembered it now. Who was this man who had "lost his way" and yet telephoned on ahead? Why didn't he give the right name? She wanted to run away, but that would show that she was afraid. And she wasn't afraid—not really. He couldn't do anything to frighten her—Molly Caxton could take care of herself.

The dinner arrived. It was a good dinner. First came some golden liquid in a tiny glass with an olive in it. Molly knew perfectly well what it was, and what it would do to her, so she fished out the olive and spilled the rest.

After the long ride they were both hungry and devoured the inviting food with a relish. Molly chatted as gaily as she could, trying all the while to plan how she could get home without going back in the automobile.

"I say," cried the erstwhile Mr. Robinson, "you're an indiscreet little thing to go joy riding with traveling salesmen you don't know any better than you do me. I wouldn't let my wife do it."

"Your wife! Goodness, have you got a wife?"

"Surest thing you know. What she

and your husband don't know won't hurt them, will it, little girl?"

Molly flushed.

"I didn't think you were such a dead game sport," he continued, leaning across the table and leering at her with hypnotic fixedness. "But the first time I saw you, I made up my mind you were all to the merry."

Little Mrs. Caxton stared at him silently.

"It's a shame the way that husband of yours neglects you," he gushed, nonchalantly putting his hand over hers and pressing it ever so gently.

In an instant the girl was on her feet. She rubbed her hand as if it had been polluted. For a moment she faced her host with flashing eyes.

"This has gone a little too far, Mr. Robin—Mr. Boxall. My husband does *not* neglect me; he's a busy man. And I doubt if your wife would like to have you say some of the things you've just said to me. If you'll excuse me I shall telephone Mr. Caxton to come after me."

"Oh, ho! That's it, is it? You'll do nothing of the sort. If you do you'll make the mistake of your life," flared back the man angrily. "What are you kicking about, anyway? You go to ride with me. You make no comment about dining in a private room——"

"But you explained that the main dining room was all full," broke in Molly in amazement.

"Going to try the innocent stuff, are you? Well, why didn't you holler when I told you I was a married man?" he sneered.

"I was too taken aback! I never supposed——" began Molly brokenly. Then with a sudden determination she started for the door.

In an instant the salesman was before it, facing her with an ugly look in his eyes.

"See here, you little fool," he cried, "I'm not going to hurt you. If you want to go, you can go; but don't make a scene here. I'll take you right back——"

"You'll do nothing of the sort," flashed the girl. Then she rang for the waiter.

"Whatever you do, take my advice and

don't tell your husband. It's for your own sake—not mine," he hissed.

The waiter appeared, and as the door opened Molly snatched her coat and slipped out. The man started after her, but she turned quickly and said:

"If you follow me I'll scream!"

Then in a twinkling she was gone, leaving him muttering indignantly between his teeth.

On sped Molly, out of the roadhouse, without casting a glance behind her, up the road toward Byfield. She had heard him say that it wasn't very far; but already dark shadows lurked in the wooded road. Not till she was within sight of houses did she stop staggering along and rest long enough to get her breath.

An automobile whirled in the distance behind her, and she hid behind a boulder until it had passed.

Then on she hurried to the village, which really was not so far away as she feared.

Surely luck was with poor little Mrs. Caxton. There *was* another train that night, which stopped at a junction and connected all right, though it did not leave for an hour and a half.

The interim gave her plenty of time to live over the whole afternoon and grow very, very wise. There was only one thing which puzzled her. Should she tell her husband? He would forgive her, of course, with a little lesson on common sense and indiscretion, but would he understand?

At precisely ten o'clock Molly wearily climbed the steps of the sheltering Inn. She felt comforted, almost happy. She was going to tell Tom everything.

In the lobby she saw him, talking to another man. His back was toward her.

"I wouldn't worry if I were you, Caxton," the other man was saying.

Molly's heart stood still. It was *he*—Robinson, alias Boxall. Evidently he had seen her at the door, for now he raised his tone and announced offhand:

"Been a busy day for me—I've been 'way to Newbridge! Why, here's Mrs. Caxton, now!"

"Where *have* you been? I've nearly had the police after you!" exclaimed

Tom, embracing his wife right there in public.

Molly sank into a vast leather chair and began to cry softly.

"I—I—I went to walk and got l-l-lost—and there wasn't a train for ever so long," she sobbed.

"Lost—lost—in a city! What are you talking about?" asked Tom, mystified, as he took her upstairs.

"It's too bad I didn't run across you," flaunted the traveling salesman. "I'd have been glad to pick you up."

"I guess you need a keeper, honey," said Tom.

"Yes," echoed Molly, "I guess I do."

They disappeared up the stairway.

"Whew!" whistled the man below.

MAGGIE MONDAY

By Margaret S. Brickenstein

"**I** WILL," said Maggie Monday in a voice that was resolutely battling with tears, "I *will* go to Coney Island some night, I *will* chew gum and munch peanuts and—and feel someone's arm around my waist! I *must* do it, or go mad!"

She leaned against the window that faced the crowded Ninth Avenue Elevated, thundering by with countless blurred faces in the windows scanning hers for a fleeting second. She flattened her tilted nose against the pane and sighed; she was tired and hot and lonely, aching for a whiff of cool, salty sea breeze, for the smell of wild flowers and——

Suddenly she struck the framework a petulant blow, threw open the window, and shook a small, clenched fist down into the noisy, thronged street.

"I *will* go!" she repeated, fiercely. "I'll never, never again be really happy if I don't. I *am* of the people, I belong to them now, why don't I live their lives, and join in their amusements? Why do I stand aside, suffering? Everybody has been in Coney Island, there isn't a girl in the office who hasn't been there, eating peanuts and molasses candy on the crowded boats, not a single girl who hasn't felt that arm about her waist and——"

Maggie Monday, frightened at her own bold thoughts, drew back from the window to escape the air that flew, hot and dusty, into her tiny room from the scalding pavement below. Then she tied a huge checkered apron around her

slender waist, and resignedly proceeded to cook her lonely meal. She was hungry enough, but to-day her cup of tea and can of smoked beef did not appeal to her; she wanted like nothing else on earth to own a bag of peanuts, and instead of the uninteresting supper to have loads of cheap, indigestible candy placed into her lap by kind, loving hands that would later steal softly about her waist——

No!

Maggie Monday took the arm which had again stealthily encircled her waist and put it, very energetically, just where it belonged. Now she *was* ashamed of herself, indeed!

She sat down beside the table, a most forlorn look in her wide blue eyes. She was lonely. So frightfully lonely, so desperately in need of a friend, that it seemed impossible to go on living this dreary, quiet life for even another day. Why, oh, why hadn't she stayed in her own little town, with its old friends calling a cheery greeting to her on the comfortable old porch, a little crooked and worn-looking as to stairs, but overgrown with blooming honeysuckle and the very picture of sweetness and comfort?

But no, these things had meant nothing to Maggie Monday, the ambitious; she needs must pack up and join the hardworking, restless throng in the strange city; and so her loneliness was all of her own making. She had kept herself very much aloof from the girls

in the office, and it seemed as though Maggie Monday's fine, golden hair, the dreamy blue eyes and the sweet, exquisitely inviting lips had been merely created to make the men in the office feel their rebuff and her cool indifference all the more.

And so Maggie Monday, exclusive little soul from her clean Western town, had made no friends. She had come to the city to work, not to play. And she had left good friends at home; those were her people, these weren't. Maggie Monday had missed nothing, consciously, until to-day; but to-day—to-day she realized with poignant pain how lonely, how utterly lonely was her life! All her fresh, unused, vibrant youth rebelled suddenly against it.

Maggie Monday tore off her protecting apron and hung it savagely upon a hook on the wall. She could not go to Coney Island alone, it would only have made the loneliness in her heart a thousand times greater. But that long, insufferably hot evening before her—good heavens!

She resolved, with a sudden, decisive toss of her golden head, to go to Mrs. Donnavan's. Mrs. Donnavan was, after all, a kindly soul, and must surely have been hurt and offended by the many, many invitations refused by her little neighbor. Maggie Monday's sun-kissed curls and Mrs. Donnavan's pitch-black hair, wrapped in curlpapers that projected from her head like ever so many little horns, had bobbed out of the window, where both kept their milk-bottles, every day at just exactly the same time; and quite naturally the two neighbors had become gradually acquainted in this manner. Mrs. Donnavan would never have been permitted to rock her huge, bewrapped body in one of the Monday porch rockers, Maggie Monday knew that well enough; that was why the kindly and persuasive overtures of Mrs. Donnavan had been so stolidly ignored. But to-night!

Maggie Monday felt she must flee the enticing thought of Coney Island and that persistent arm about her waist, and where could she flee to? Besides—she smiled half bitterly, half good-naturedly,

to herself—who and what in all the world *was* Maggie Monday?

Mrs. Donnavan was discovered also adorned in a checkered apron, although it was far from being a clean one, and was frying potatoes and a big, juicy steak, while vigorously stirring a huge pot of creamed peas with the one disengaged hand. The joyous smile on her red, shining face went straight to Maggie Monday's lonely heart.

"That's the ticket, you're comin' just in time for supper!" was Mrs. Donnavan's greeting. "And I ain't makin' no excuses for the victuals, neither, for I was thinkin' for to blow us all—that is me, my old man, and Dick Jarvis, who's comin' over—to somethin' particular nice to-night. Set right down, I'm *that* glad you came in, Miss Monday."

"I really won't stay for supper!" said Maggie Monday, inhaling the savory odor of steak, fried potatoes and coffee with starved, greedy lungs. "I'm sure I know I ought not to have come in just at this hour, Mrs. Donnavan! But I was—I was *so* desperately lonely!"

Mrs. Donnavan nodded understandingly; and when she found that she was able to leave the stove for a moment she came over to Maggie Monday's side, pressing the golden head reassuringly and very tenderly to the spot where the soiled brown apron covered a big, generous heart.

"Of course you're lonely, duckie!" she agreed, planting a loud kiss on the girl's cheek, "who wouldn't be, now? You don't lead the kind of a life a young girl of your age should live; in fact, if you'll excuse me for takin' the liberty and sayin' so, Miss Monday, you're not livin' at all. I know my old man would say I was buttin' in, but I just can't help it, it ain't natural. Lord bless my soul, duckie, don't I know *just* how you must be goin' dippy with loneliness, your parents far away, no friends to run around with—now don't you git mad at old Mrs. Donnavan, duckie——"

It wasn't because Maggie Monday took Mrs. Donnavan's words amiss, surely; but suddenly she flung both arms around the good woman's neck, and wept on the generous bosom until the

brown gingham was uncomfortably moist and more sobs would truly have been an impossibility. Then, when all the weight had been thrown off of the poor starved little heart, when even the strange craving for Coney Island with bags of peanuts and boxes of molasses candy had been poured eagerly into her ears, only then did a queer little smile come to Mrs. Donnavan's lips. But she was far too diplomatic to explain the smile.

When Maggie Monday came back into the kitchen, the last choking sob almost forgotten, the last hot tear dried on Mrs. Donnavan's guest towel—a paper napkin—Mr. Donnavan, small, wiry and copper-haired, was already talking excited politics into his young friend's attentive ear. That Dick Jarvis appeared more than ordinarily delighted to shake hands with her was very apparent, and with his fresh, smoothly shaven face and the merry blue eyes, big and very round, greeting her, he looked uncommonly good to Maggie Monday.

It quite escaped her powers of observation that a tremendous horseshoe diamond pin stuck rakishly into a bright red necktie did not improve the looks of a loudly striped brown suit; she failed to see that the merry twinkle in his eyes gave place to an unpleasantly sagacious expression that remained, even while the smile on his lips continued to warm and cheer.

"This ain't the first time Dick saw you, Miss Monday," Mrs. Donnavan explained with a sly wink at that young gentleman. "He's been ravin' about your hair to me as long as four, five weeks already; honest now, you needn't blush, my dear! And many's the time he asked me and the old man all about you, me of course tellin' him as much as I could, which wasn't an awful lot! So this is a lucky day for Dick Jarvis, ain't it, my boy?"

Maggie Monday flushed with pleasure, she could not help it; and when Dick's eyes met hers with an expression that proved Mrs. Donnavan's story a true one she lowered her eyes in pleased confusion.

Then Mrs. Donnavan tactfully changed

the conversation to other subjects, discussing the heat, the high price of ice, the noisy troop of children in the flat above; she spoke unconcernedly but well of Dick Jarvis' splendid and promising job with the famous silk house of long standing, and had skillfully arrived at moving pictures and the pleasures of surf bathing, when she arose to clear the table. But suddenly she stopped, with a coffee cup balanced in her hand, a light of inspiration in her kindly eyes.

"Suppose we all clear them dishes in a hurry, and run down to Coney for a spell?" she demanded, in a voice and glowing with a smile of anticipation that would have made a refusal utterly impossible.

Coney Island! Her dream, her long cherished dream was coming true! Maggie Monday assented with such joyous enthusiasm that Dick's eyes almost bulged from their sockets with admiration for her.

But just then Mrs. Donnavan struck her knee a resounding blow.

"Take me for havin' a good forgettery and nothin' else besides!" she wailed excitedly. "Ben, for the Lord's sakes, *you'd* never think of nothin' if I didn't wrack my poor head for the both of us! We promised the Kearneys to come over for a game o' hearts to-night, you know it as well as I do!"

Catching his wife's unmistakable wink, Mr. Donnavan *did* remember perfectly well, subsiding hastily into a careful, noncommittal silence.

Just when Maggie Monday looked terribly crestfallen, Mrs. Donnavan had another flash of inspiration.

"I've got it!" she announced, brightly. "You two young ones take a little trip down to Coney by yourselves, then we can all go together some other time! It's no use stayin' in the swelterin' city a night like this, is it, now? And considerin' that you met Dick perfectly proper-like with me and the old man, it certainly would be just the thing for you to do!"

All Maggie Monday's doubts were quickly talked away by the combined efforts of Dick Jarvis and the Donnavan couple, and so in a few minutes she was back again in their midst with a shabby

pair of gloves, and her Sunday hat hiding all the glorious hair with the exception of a few curls that refused to make the long-sought-for trip to Coney Island hidden away under a tiny black hat, even though very fat and healthy looking cherries grew on the top of it.

Mrs. Donnavan smiled more brightly than ever under the weight of the laurel wreath she felt she justly deserved, motherly pride and satisfaction glistening in her eyes as she watched the two young people vanish down the street. She had taken good care to impress the absolute necessity of peanuts, molasses candy and ice cream upon Dick's brain, with strict orders that he was to show the dear, lonely little duckie a ripping good time.

"That's what she wanted, only she didn't know it herself," Mrs. Donnavan told her old man, as she settled down in front of a peach basket piled high with stockings, and drew a shapeless sewing-basket toward her. "She wanted to *live*, the poor duckie!"

It was with great difficulty that Maggie Monday and her escort pushed their way through a noisy, impatient crowd, and at last managed to secure two camp chairs on the upper deck of the Coney Island boat; but heat and discomfort amid shouting, laughing people, the pushing and elbowing, the nauseating odor of perspiration intermingled with cheap perfume and peppermint, proved to be nothing but a source of keenest interest and delight to Maggie Monday. She enjoyed watching the merrymaking of the happy little shopgirls and their still happier beaux; their shrieks of laughter, their strident voices vibrant with good humor awoke an answering joy in her soul. For once Maggie Monday forgot that she, exclusive little soul from her clean, unsophisticated Western town, was in the midst of and one of the proletariat.

With one exception.

Almost the moment Dick Jarvis had gallantly secured a campstool for her on the crowded deck, Maggie Monday had noticed a young man opposite her. Having just glanced at his face, Maggie Monday had no real peace until she had

furtively stolen another look at him. There was something about him that somehow commanded attention; just what it was, she was unable to tell. Perhaps it was because he reminded her of old-fashioned paintings of princes in black velvet suits with wide lace collars, sad, pale faces illumined by large, dreamy eyes, slender hands resting affectionately on graceful greyhounds. This young man with thick, shining black hair falling across a broad white forehead, with great dark eyes and a pensive mouth, wore no lace collar on a velvet suit; he was clad in very modish clothes, neat and well groomed. He returned Maggie Monday's gaze with thoughtful eyes, and then, in very visible amazement, he stared attentively at her companion. When his dark eyes again sought her face, the girl caught herself blushing, just why, she could not have told.

But Dick Jarvis soon claimed her attention with innumerable jokes which required appreciative laughter and remarks from his companion to spur him on; and while she listened with rapt attention, eating of the molasses candy and peanuts Dick had generously placed in her lap, Maggie Monday allowed her eyes to drink in the beauty of the starlit heaven above her. She was conscious of a wonderful, liberating, supreme contentment. Mrs. Donnavan was surely right; she had never really lived. Nothing more to be desired remained now—but the arm about her waist. Maggie Monday looked up shyly; and saw the melancholy young prince's eyes full upon her. And again she blushed.

After a while the musicians came to their side of the deck, and played upon zither, violin, and a sobbing 'cello. And then Maggie Monday forgot her bag of peanuts, forgot Dick Jarvis at her side, and stared, dreamily, with melancholy eyes just like the princely stranger's, into the waves that danced, silver-flooded by the radiant moon, beside the swaying boat. Now she was thoroughly happy.

The music rushed into Dick's blood just as it took possession of every man and woman on the boat. Before the third challenging "Rag" tore itself

madly, tauntingly from the coaxing instruments, every lad with blood in his veins had encircled his love's waist with an affectionate arm, and every girl's hand unconsciously sought her lad's eager hand. Dick Jarvis, too, drew closer to Maggie Monday with the sunny curls, and glanced, full of desire, at the slender, blue-veined hands in her lap.

"The first time I saw your hair, Miss Monday," he whispered into her ear, "I wanted to meet and know you like I never wanted anything in the world before, Mrs. D. will vouch for that. Believe me, no girl has ever made me feel as you do, I'm telling you the truth. You have certainly got me, Maggie, little girl——"

He crushed her hand in a large, unpleasantly moist one, bringing his flushed face close to hers. The huge diamond horseshoe in the red cravat did not glisten half as brilliantly as did his big, round blue eyes.

But Maggie Monday drew back, startled.

"Oh, please, Mr. Jarvis, please!" she entreated, helplessly.

"I'd do anything in the world for you, Maggie, little girl, honest!" Dick assured her, passionately, to the coaxing strain of a bold turkey-trot that helped to fan the flame of desire in his brain.

Maggie Monday was frightened almost to death. She hadn't wanted *this*—no, no, a thousand times *no*! The desire, nourished by her imagination, the great desire to feel that arm about her waist, now loomed up before her like some horrible, wicked, insulting thing. This man was a stranger—she had never even seen him before to-day! And he wanted to—— She recoiled from his hot breath upon her cheek; she tore her hand from his brutal grasp with a little frightened cry, shrinking from the ill-concealed desire in his eyes. Why, oh, why had she come!

But Dick Jarvis was a connoisseur of women in his way; when he saw the effect his as yet unwelcome attentions had upon the girl at his side, he tactfully withdrew, to abide his time. He was clever enough to realize that Maggie Monday differed from the girls of his

acquaintance, and perhaps for just that reason she fascinated him to such an extent. Every girl must be won in a different way, and he was confident that before long he would have won Maggie Monday in the way she desired. There was no hurry, anyway.

So he smiled at her in his old, cheerful way, releasing the fluttering hand almost instantly.

"Don't be angry, Maggie," he pleaded with a downcast face. "I simply cannot help it; but I won't do it again, if you don't want me to."

However, Dick Jarvis was not true to his word. When, an hour or so later, he had restored faith in Maggie Monday's heart by showing her all the wonders of the Island, when he had treated her royally to ice cream and candy, and had waited in vain for some encouragement from the girl at his side, his control fell from him like a mantle. Moreover, Maggie Monday, with radiant eyes and with faintly flushed cheeks beckoning to his lips above the slender throat, was indeed a temptation difficult not to succumb to. Dick Jarvis could resist no longer.

But then Maggie Monday, breathless and terror-stricken, fled from her surprised suitor, fled, with little stifled sobs in her throat, afraid to pause and ask anyone in that dense crowd which way she must turn to reach the boat bound for New York and safety. Mad terror in her soul she fled, stumbling heedlessly into people, her hat awry, her lips quivering; she did not realize that Dick Jarvis could never, never have hoped to find her again in that Saturday evening crowd, and so, when a hand fell suddenly upon her shoulder, she shrank from its touch, uttering a piercing little shriek.

"What's the matter?" inquired the princely stranger, turning her quietly toward him. "Are you in trouble? Have you lost your companion?"

Maggie Monday was too dazed and too relieved to answer immediately, and so he led her quietly by her hand out of the crowd; his matter-of-fact manner brought back her confidence, filling her with a strange feeling of trust and peace as she willingly walked beside him.

Slowly, little by little, he was able to learn what had frightened her so, what awful thing had caused her to break away and escape—anywhere—just away from that man.

"I—I think I struck him!" she concluded, finally, with flaming eyes.

"Well, he'll undoubtedly be all the better for that," the princely stranger assured her in a soft, mellow voice, "and now we must put a stop to those tears. I think you have sobbed enough for one day, what do you say? No one weeps in Coney Island, outwardly, and I'd hate to have you make an exception. Let me take you to some quiet place, or better still, we'll go straight home. I'll tell you my name, and then you'll feel lots better right away. It's David Forrester."

"And I am Maggie Monday," she sniffed, trying to smile at him through tears. "I am employed in the office of Joseph Dean, a lawyer."

"So that is where I saw you!" He paused to look at her intently, and again Maggie felt conscious of a wave of scarlet in her cheeks. "Uncle's office, of course! You won't remember, I know, but I have not forgotten your face, Maggie Monday. In spite of what happened in the private office of my uncle that memorable day, I could not help seeing and remembering you. All the way over on the boat I was wondering where, where it could have been that I had seen you! So you're the girl in Uncle Joseph's office, Maggie Monday, and I find you like this!"

He smiled suddenly, thrusting both hands into his trouser pockets.

"You haven't, by any lucky chance, your return ticket with you, Maggie Monday, have you?" he asked. "For unless you have money to take you home—and I see no hopeful purse in your hand—it will prove something of a difficulty to get us both back to the city. I am the proud possessor of exactly twenty-five cents."

"I have no money with me at all," Maggie admitted, reddening.

"We'll go home on the cars, then," David decided, with a cheery smile, and led the way.

Long before they had reached the cars Maggie Monday had poured out her heart to him, never for a moment realizing that she was talking to a stranger. Somehow she just had to tell him everything; all about the sadly missed and beloved Western home with its crooked porch and the fragrant honeysuckle vainly trying to keep out the heat of the great, warm, free sun, and the cherished ones in the plain little house; about her loneliness, and even, confident that he would understand, about the long-yearned-for trip to Coney Island with its vision of peanuts and molasses candy, and—yes, after a little hesitation, even the desire for the encircling arm came to light!

There was no feeling of shame in her heart when she told him; she did not even stop to think why she told this stranger all the things that so sorely troubled her; she scarcely realized that she was doing anything the least bit unusual. He simply was no stranger. Something in his pale, melancholy face with the deepset, thoughtful eyes inspired her with absolute confidence. She felt sheltered and protected at his side, and soon won back the bright little smile that belonged to her sun-kissed hair.

David nodded his head, understandingly.

"Like Mrs. Gummidge, you are just a bit contrary, *because* you were so lone and lorn; that's a great deal jollier than her plight anyhow; you remember Mrs. Gummidge was always all three together!" His lips parted for a whimsical smile as he looked down into the upturned face beside him. "You wanted that trip to Coney Island, the companionship and the peanuts just as much as the encircling arm about your waist, but when you got these things in the way you got them, you no longer wanted them! The way it happened was the wrong way, you see, that's all. It's really very simple. As for that arm, Maggie Monday, there isn't a soul breathing in this world who didn't ache for and dream lovingly of that arm some time or other. Some of us think of very little else!"

He paused, and threw back his head as

though to banish an unpleasant thought.

"I want to tell you why I cannot buy you any little delicacy or even a boat-ride back to New York. It's not because I wouldn't love to, but because I am a beggar, or very nearly one, just now. You see, I have no desire to follow in Uncle Joseph's footsteps. Uncle Joe and I can come to no understanding. He is firm, so am I. The day I came into the office and saw you there, Maggie Monday, I was receiving the last check from my stern relative's hand, before journeying forth into my chosen career. It was a generous check, yet only a very tiny part of it is left; I locked that away at home, afraid I might be led into temptation to spend it. It's for the rent, you see."

"Yes," said Maggie Monday, "but when the rent is paid, what then?"

"Ah, well, that's three long, long days more; by that time I may have heard from my last poem, it's been held three weeks now; something tells me that looks hopeful."

"Oh—you are a poet?" Maggie Monday was radiant.

"Not according to Uncle Joe!" he laughed a little, then, suddenly, the sadness crept into his face again. "Years ago I thought the world was waiting for me, Maggie Monday. It was—my little, narrow world, the world of my uncle's nephew, the world I was born into. I find the world of my choice not one whit anxious for me, but then—I love it just the same."

"You're not like Mrs. Gummidge, or Maggie Monday, then," she told him, shyly.

"Oh, you may let me be the third of the party, I'm lone and lorn and contrary, too, Maggie Monday. So alone and heartsick, sometimes, I—but now I have you, haven't I?"

She felt his dark eyes on her face, with their serene, sweet, sad expression.

He had not even moved toward her as he spoke.

A great joy welled into Maggie Monday's heart.

"Yes," she said, simply.

"I shall come often," he went on, after a moment's silence. "We will put that heartbreaking loneliness out of our lives. This is where you live, Maggie Monday?" he gazed at the endless rows of windows with bottles, pots and kettles adorning the crumpling framework, and shook his head disapprovingly. "Ah, no, it is not where you *should* live. Shall I tell you how you will live, and God granting, not alone?"

"Tell me," she urged, softly.

But instead he smiled his whimsical little smile. They stood together a moment, their souls carrying them swiftly into the enchanted Garden of Hope, where blood-red roses dreamed among the velvety green, nodding confidently to them from sunlit paths, murmuring greetings to them, as they walked together, hand in hand.

Then the princely stranger nodded his head, happily.

"All our lives long we dream, Maggie Monday," he said, softly. "We dream of inexpressively wonderful things, and live in hopes; and then, because we soared too high, our realized dreams disappoint us. It's the dream that is so wonderful, Maggie Monday, not the realization of the dream. And yet," he smiled into her eyes as his hand closed over her's, "and yet I want you to go on dreaming of that arm around your waist, Maggie Monday, if you'll wait—wait long enough for the right arm!"

He bared his head and stood before her in the moonlight.

Then—

"Good night," said Maggie Monday, and climbed the stairs to her stuffy little room, all the bitter loneliness banished from her soul.



THE GIRL WHO FIBBED

By Helen Jetmore Major

IMAGINE my consternation when I found that Franqui expected to take in the festivities of Andean week! The Andean Club is a local organization, and all the most prominent men in the city belong. It had attained almost nation-wide fame at this time because of the magnificent new clubhouse which was just completed and which was to be opened with a whole series of entertainments. There was to be a reception on Monday evening to friends of the members and to out of town guests who represented clubs which were in some way or other affiliated with the Andean. There was to be a grand banquet on Wednesday evening, a theatre party Friday night—the club had reserved the entire theatre—and a masked ball Saturday night. In between were to be sandwiched exhibition matches in tennis, and golf, and fencing, and half a dozen other sports.

Oh, it was to be an hilarious week. Franqui had all the different events on her tongue's end. She had read every word she could find on the subject and, as she knew everyone of standing in the city would be there, I suppose it was no wonder that, since her visit to me chanced to include Andean week—so the papers called it—she should have counted on a gay time.

I was in her room watching Rena, her maid, unpack, and my heart sank as I saw the wonderful lace and chiffon creations lifted from between the layers of tissue paper. Franqui and I had roomed together for several years at Miss Hosmer's school, and I had often told her of my uneventful life since Dad and Mother had died and I had had to spend my vacations with—and, since our graduation, make my home with—Grandmother. Evidently, though she had not understood. I didn't say anything until Rena opened an extra box and began taking

out boots of every description—pink and white and blue and yellow satin slippers, dainty bedroom mules, black and brown and white walking shoes, fur-lined carriage boots, bronze and gray and sand-colored afternoon pumps. I had not yet seen the contents of the enormous hat-box, but I could guess what it held.

"Franqui," I cried, aghast, "what possessed you to bring all these lovely, lovely things? When on earth did you expect to wear them?"

"Why, next week." Surprised at the question, she looked up from straightening a tulle bow which had been crushed in transit.

My next query brought out the truth. I saw that her heart was set on going, and it took courage to explain how very quietly Grandmother and I lived—that my chief diversion was to attend the semi-monthly meetings at the church. It did sound rather dull, but then, I am the sort who can take things about as they come. Franqui is different. She must have amusement.

"I don't see how you stand it, Dot!" she exclaimed when I had finished. I could see that she was mentally contrasting my days with her own butterfly existence. "I'd simply—die!"

"It bothered me a little at first," I confessed, "but it is not so bad now that I am used to it. Grandmother is very old, you know, and——"

Franqui's thoughts were still on Andean week.

"I *must* go," she interrupted, impatiently. "It would be too dreadful to mope around the house when everyone else is having a good time."

"You can't, Franqui." I could have wept over her disappointment, but she was far from tears.

"My dear, there isn't any such word as 'can't' in my vocabulary," she said, airily. "Wait. Let me think." A tiny

frown creased her smooth forehead, and she was silent for as much as two minutes. Then her head lifted, and a gleam shot through her dark eyes. I knew the look from our school days. It meant mischief.

"Don't, Franqui. Don't," I begged, then added, a little doubtfully: "Perhaps I can get tickets for some of the matches. I believe they are to be semi-public, and some of the ladies at the church must surely——"

"Matches indeed!" with great scorn. "We're going to the ball, and to the reception, and the banquet, and the theatre party. We won't miss a single thing. Hurry, Dot, and get into the very best-looking suit that you own. Rena, I'll wear my white corduroy, and the black hat with the roses. Shall I carry a sunshade?" She paused critically. "Yes, it will be more effective even though it is a little late in the season. The black and white one, Rena, with the long handle. Quick, Dot! We've no time to waste."

"But——" I protested, weakly. I knew she was planning something which we ought not to do, but it is fearfully hard to combat Franqui. She has a manner which carries all before it.

"No 'buts,' Lady Dorothy. Remember, the first duty of a hostess is to insure the pleasure of her guests." She pronounced the words with such perfect mimicry of Madame that we both went into gales of laughter.

In the end Franqui had her way. She always does. I wasn't convinced, however, and I was feeling woefully apprehensive as, wonderfully bedecked, we started for Broad Street somewhat over an hour later. She wouldn't tell me where we were bound, and I expected her to get lost. Instead, she led the way straight as a die to the new clubhouse and turned boldly up the front steps. Involuntarily I hung back, but Franqui had her hand under my arm and she fairly pulled me with her.

"Don't look so frightened," she whispered, fiercely. "You'll give everything away."

I never saw a more innocent air than the one with which she tripped lightly into the huge entrance hall, which ex-

tended up through the center of the building. Balconies encircled it at each floor, and these were divided into separate nooks by screens and high-backed couches. Opposite where we were standing was a great fireplace, flanked on either side by glass-fronted trophy cases and surmounted by a lordly elk's head set low above the shelf. An enormous lounge faced the fireplace, and nearer us was a carved table on which rested a dull gold electrolier.

My heart was beating like a trip hammer, but I noted these details while Franqui was smiling on the doorman. Franqui has the most ravishing smile you can imagine. I think it the chief one of her many attractions. But then, to my mind, Franqui is the most beautiful girl in the world anyway. I'm quite rabid on the subject.

"Is Mr. Russell in?" she asked sweetly. That is the name of the President of the Andean, though where she learned the fact I can't say. Franqui always seems to know the tiny unobtrusive facts that count at important moments. That is one of the secrets of her success. "Not here? Oh, dear, how annoying! I wanted particularly to see him. Dorothy, what shall I do?"

She had raised her voice a trifle, and a group of men who were sorting programs turned at the sound. Two or three started forward, but a good-looking blond giant reached us first.

"Can I be of service?" he asked solicitously. He gazed with approval upon the fetching picture presented by Franqui as she stood a little apart, framed by the dark paneling. "I am Ralph Scovil."

"I don't—know." Franqui appeared to hesitate. She looked up at him with soft appeal. "You see," she explained naively, "I am visiting Miss Courtland." She nodded in my direction, and the young man bowed, apparently accepting this as an introduction. "It is about next week that I am worrying. Of course I expected my cousin to look after me, but his absence naturally alters things. I didn't see him before he left, and I fear that he forgot to make provision for me. It was that about which

I wished to see Mr. Russell. My cousin is Watts Douglass."

Watts Douglass! I shivered at the audacity of the scheme, but—Watts Douglass! What had possessed Franqui to name a man so well known? Why, even I had heard of Watts Douglass, the most popular man in the city, beloved of men and women alike, famed for his wealth and for his kindness, one of the founders of the Andean, and chiefly instrumental in raising the money for the present building. Watts Douglass! I trembled before the crash.

Nothing happened. If Mr. Scovil was surprised, he managed to conceal the fact. Franqui was gently poking the rug with the point of her parasol.

"You say you are Watts Douglass' cousin?"

Franqui nodded.

"Hmm. Well, in that case, I presume we'll have to look out for you."

"Thank you so much," said Franqui gratefully. "Of course," she continued demurely, "I realize that since Watts is away I can't expect much but—I thought Mr. Russell might give us tickets for the reception and—for some of the games for Watts' sake."

Scovil smiled quizzically.

"I think we can do better than that for—Watts' sake," he said. "I can easily manage the reception, and the banquet, and the theatre party. As for the dance——" He looked at her thoughtfully. Her eyes pleaded with him, and he came to a sudden decision. "Yes. We'll manage the dance, too."

"Oh!" breathed Franqui, ecstatically. Her enthusiasm was not all acting. She fairly glowed as she turned to me. "Oh, Dorothy, isn't that simply glorious! We are to go to *everything*! Oh, Oh!"

Of course I knew as well as anything that the man had had no intention of including me in his invitation. Franqui knew it, too, but little she cared for that. She had made up her mind that I was to go. Mr. Scovil rose to the occasion nobly. He didn't falter for a moment as he took his card-case from his pocket.

"I will have your dance orders filled," he promised. "They will be waiting for

you on your arrival. Miss Courtland and Miss——"

"How stupid of me! My name is Nesbitt—Franqui Nesbitt."

"And the address where I may send the tickets?"

Franqui gave it and they exchanged a few more words before we sallied forth, as unconcernedly as though we had had some real right there. I could scarcely wait until we were alone.

"Franqui, you wretch! You'll end in the penitentiary yet. Whatever put such a wild project into your head?"

She squeezed my arm gaily.

"It worked, didn't it?"

"Will you dare go?" I was breathless at her audacity.

She turned to me in sheer astonishment.

"After taking that trouble to get the invitations? Of course I shall go—and you'll go with me."

It was a terrific temptation, for I love fun, and Franqui's talk of Andean week had excited all my latent longings. Still, I am a natural coward. I couldn't decide so precipitately.

"What about Watts Douglass?" I asked, temporizing. "Franqui, I thought I'd collapse when you spoke of him."

She giggled like the naughty little girl that she was.

"Your face was the funniest thing," she said. "You looked as though you expected to be put out."

"I did."

"Never fear, Dot. I wouldn't risk a thing like that. I knew what I was doing, and it wasn't nearly so venturesome as it seemed. The papers for two days have been moaning because Watts Douglass, who organized this entire celebration, has been called to New York on important business and won't be back for three weeks or a month."

It was like Franqui to remember that at just the right moment. Now if I—but then I'm not so clever as she is.

Well, at any rate, Andean week was ours. It was ours literally. Franqui came, saw, and conquered with a vengeance. The men simply flocked about her, attentive partly for Watts Douglass' sake, but principally because of her

own radiant charm. She was in her element, holding an entire crowd enthralled as she distributed her favors with impartial carelessness.

Of necessity I shone in the reflected glory, for Franqui would not go anywhere unless I was with her. She was looking out for me every single moment, so that I had a perfectly glorious time. That is Franqui's way. She is never happy unless other people share her enjoyment. In all the years of our friendship, I have never known her to do a really selfish thing. That is another secret of her witchery.

Franqui had a host of devoted cavaliers before the opening reception was over, and they fairly deluged us with flowers for the rest of the week. The house overflowed with them, until even poor old Grandmother waxed enthusiastic. At first she had viewed our outings askance, primly resentful of Franqui and the changes which her advent had wrought in our quiet household. No one could resist Franqui long, however, and before she left Grandmother fell under her spell.

Ralph Scovil haunted the house. I laugh yet, when I recall some of the absurd excuses he invented in order to be near Franqui. He sat next her at every single affair of the week. I have often wondered how he managed it, for, of course, he must have had engagements with other girls, made before Franqui appeared on the scene.

On Saturday afternoon a great crowd of us stopped for tea at the club in accordance with our usual custom. It was a splendid place to gossip about the matches that we had just witnessed, and to discuss plans for the evening. I had made more friends in the past five days than I could have done in twice as many years without Franqui. She and Mr. Scovil had slipped away, and I was talking to some man in the hall on the first floor. We had drawn our chairs near the fire and I, at least, was feeling a bit drowsy. There is such a thing as being too strenuous and the gayeties, much as I had enjoyed them, had tired me.

Suddenly I was conscious of a stir at

the door. A man whom I had not met had entered.

"Watts!" "Watts Douglass!" "Good boy! When did you get in?" The crowd surged forward in welcome, while I sat literally frozen in my chair. I was quite alone. Even the man with whom I had been talking had deserted. I heard fragmentary bits of conversation and at last words which galvanized me into life.

"I say, Watts, you needn't think that your cousin has missed you, for she hasn't. Scovil took her in charge, and——"

"My cousin?"

"Yes—Miss Nesbitt. Didn't you know she was here?"

The poor man never had a chance to answer. I pushed through the crowd by sheer strength and, tucking my arm through his, smiled up at him as though I had known him all my life. I couldn't have done it at any other time. It wasn't like me at all, but I was desperate. We must not have a public exposure. Perhaps we deserved it, but—it would be too horrible.

"Come, Mr. Douglass," I said, laughing brightly, though my knees were trembling so that I could scarcely stand. "Come. You must see Franqui first thing."

Of course Mr. Douglass was utterly bewildered. He looked dazed at the onslaught, but he was too thoroughly a gentleman to resist, so I dragged him through the hall and up the stairs to one of the little nooks on the first balcony. Of course there was a lift, but in my hurry it never entered my head to use it.

As soon as we were alone, I sank down and buried my face in my hands. The reaction had come. I am not brave. Mr. Douglass was much concerned over my agitation and wanted to fetch a glass of water. I needed it badly, but I dared not let him out of my sight. He stood by, twisting uneasily at his mustache until I pulled myself together. Then I told him the whole story. I softened it as much as I could, but it didn't sound a bit nice, and I was fearfully ashamed. Fortunately, however, he took it as a huge joke.

"Plucky Franqui!" he exclaimed, when I had finished. "I'm glad you girls had a good time. You certainly earned it."

"Then——" I questioned, hopefully. Somehow he had managed to put me at my ease.

"Don't worry," he said, with a light shrug of his broad shoulders. "Hasn't it occurred to you that I might feel complimented to be claimed as a cousin by a charming young lady? I have often lamented the fact that I own no such relative. I am glad I returned in time to meet the one with whom circumstances and her own cleverness have provided me. I presume that is she over there with Ralph?"

He nodded across to the opposite side of the balcony, and I followed his glance. Sure enough, there were Franqui and Mr. Scovil. Their backs were toward us, and they seemed absorbed in each other.

"Will you introduce me to my cousin? I wish to compliment her upon her ingenuity." His tones expressed sincere admiration.

I arose, and he guided me around to where the others were sitting. Neither of them seemed particularly pleased over the interruption.

"Hello, Watts," said Scovil, brusquely. "You back?"

Franqui understood in a second. The color fled from her face, and she caught her breath sharply. She is usually so ready that I had expected her to pass off the situation with a laugh. Instead she

began to cry. I suppose she was overwrought, and, besides, her feeling for Ralph Scovil complicated matters.

"Oh, I say," cried Douglass, starting forward. "It's nothing to cry about. As I was telling Miss Courtland, I feel proud——"

Ralph Scovil brushed him aside without ceremony, placing a protecting arm about Franqui as he bent tenderly over the bowed head. It was my first experience with public love-making, but the sight of Franqui in tears cast other matters into insignificance.

"Hush, dear. Hush," murmured Ralph, as though he were soothing a child.

Franqui shrank away.

"You don't know, Ralph. You don't know," she sobbed. Nevertheless, she seemed quite content to lie in his arms.

"About Watts?"

Franqui looked up quickly. Her face was bathed in tears but she looked more lovely than ever.

"You *do* know!"

"I've known from the beginning, dear. Watts is my half-brother!"

I can't imagine the reason, but that remark struck us all as funny and we began to laugh. We laughed and laughed and laughed—until the situation was quite clear and we had become friends. Later we became—well, Franqui and I are now sisters-in-law—or—I wonder exactly what relation you would call it, since Watts and Ralph are only half-brothers?

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"'Yes, Bessie,' smiled the mother, 'it is very likely that you will.'

"'Um,' thoughtfully mused Bessie, as she resumed her book, 'it certainly looks as if I am up against it.'"

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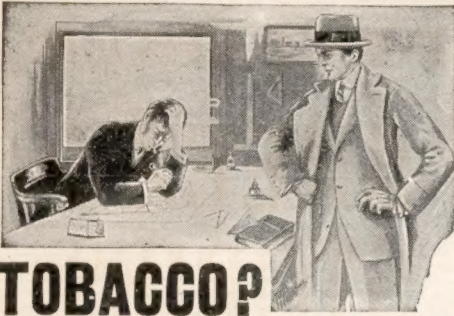
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